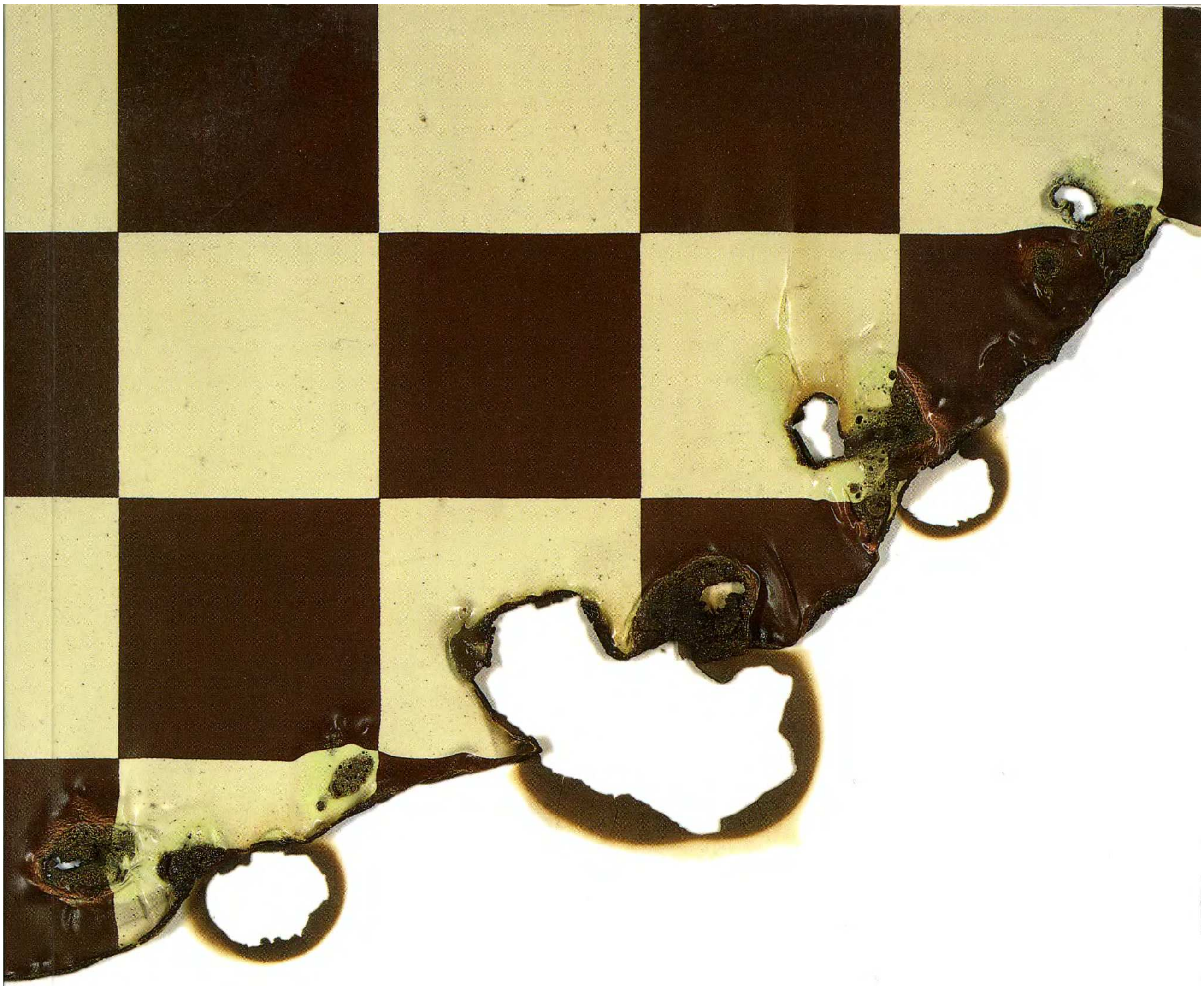

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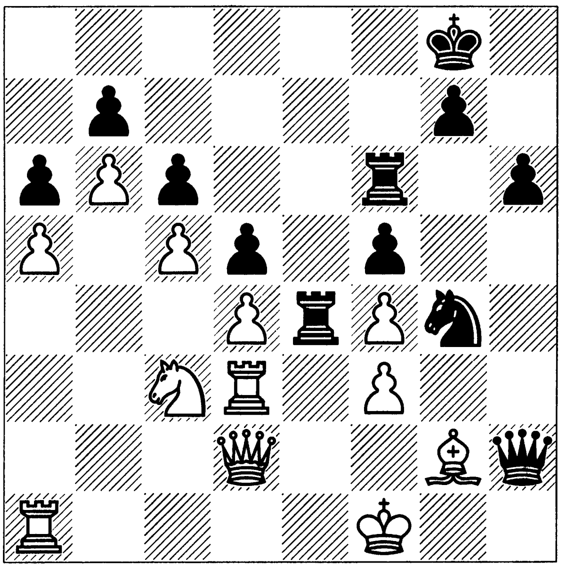

Position after 31...♖e4!! in Kramnik–Shirov, Linares 1994

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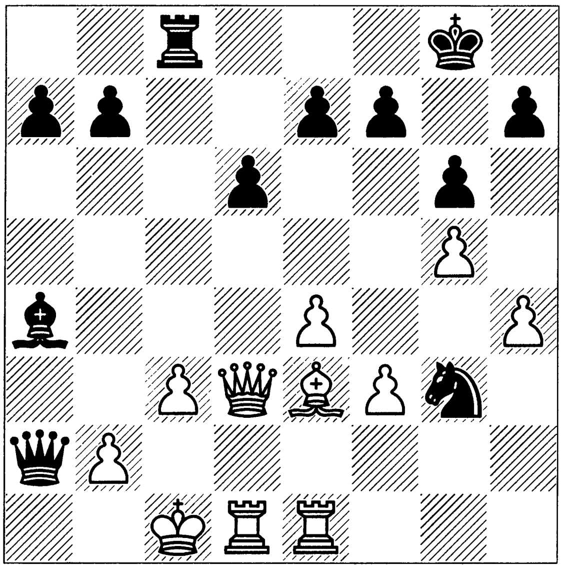
FIRE ON BOARD

By Alexei Shirov

Foreword By
Jonathan Speelman



Petelin–Shirov, *Ivano-Frankovsk 1988*

1...♖xc3+! and White resigned (0-1) because of **2 ♕xc3**
2 bxc3 ♕a1+ 3 ♔d2 (3 ♕b1 ♕xc3+ 4 ♕c2 ♕xc2 mate) 3...♕b2+
4 ♕c2 ♕xc2 mate **2...♘e2+ 3 ♖xe2 ♕a1+ 4 ♔d2 ♕xd1 mate 0-1**

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Foreword

In the early decades of this century the Old Masters frequently bemoaned the "impending Draw Death" of chess, as more and more games, impeccably played but stiflingly orthodox, ended with Black completely neutralising the small advantage of the first move. Many generations of chess players later – our turnover is much faster than the biological one, a distinct new wave every decade, say – chess strategy has developed to an unimaginable degree, and this dire prediction is still far from taking effect.

Despite an exponential explosion in the sheer quantity of theoretical knowledge and a generally very high level of technique, the best players continue to produce totally original games, none more so than Alexei Shirov. Meticulous opening preparation and intense concentration at the board are common currency among the very top Grandmasters. Alexei, however, possesses a quite extraordinary imagination which regularly alchemises positions, the like of which the rest of us only get to enjoy under the bluest of moons.

It is therefore not only a pleasure but also a great compliment to be asked by Alexei to write the foreword to his very first book of games. Nowadays, I often find it expedient to bury my own brand of "chess madness" under a technical exterior: the sympathetic link to an earlier, more chaotic type of chess is very pleasing.

Shirov has arranged *Fire on Board* into a long chronological section, followed by a theoretical chapter on that most terrifying of systems, the Botvinnik variation of the Anti-Meran Gambit, followed by a further section containing various endgames.

The chronological part starts with games when Shirov was as young as eleven in 1983. It was intended to end in 1994, when the book was supposed to be handed in. But with Shirov, a huge chap markedly taller than me and chaotic not only at the chess board, things are seldom totally straightforward. So it is that, as he explains in the introduction, a great deal of work was lost when his notebook computer was stolen in January 1995. Thus this is not really his first book but a somewhat larger ordinal (no doubt connected by the robbery to an extremely vulgar fraction). But his grievous loss has to some extent been our gain; for the book now contains games right through to the Olympiad in Erevan last September.

Every chess player has his own favourite players, games and styles. On a professional level, I am often most impressed by dry strategic games, in which one very strong player manages to keep control against an equally strong opponent. But these require a perhaps excessively delicate palate. And along with the general reader, I find most enjoyable those games in which there is a maximum of violence.

These the reader will find in abundance. As early as the very first game in the book, we discover eleven-year-old Alexei bashing away with three of his attacking pieces *en prise*. As Misha Tal said: "...they can only take one at time". And of course as a Russian born in Latvia, Alexei was not only greatly influenced by that magician, but even got to analyse with him in his mid-teens. Indeed, in his combinational ferocity, one could see Shirov as one of Tal's direct lineal descendants: except that he has a quirkiness, a liking for king walks in the middlegame, for example, which owes much more to a player like David Bronstein or Bent Larsen. One can see both these characteristics, the ferocity and the eccentricity in one of the most marvellous games in the collection, the slugfest against Eingorn in Stockholm 1989 (game 16): in which Shirov, with his (white) king on d3 as early as move 19, paradoxically exposes it further by sacrificing the e-pawn to prosecute his attack against the enemy king.

One of Shirov's strongest characteristics is his liking for strange material balances. One can see this, for example in his lovely win against Joel Lautier (game 20) in which queen and two bishops trounce queen and two rooks; the splendid double piece sacrifice against Judit Polgar, albeit as the result of opening analysis (game 79); or his win against Yudasin (game 57); which finishes with a rook, knight and two connected passed pawns on the seventh routing a queen, rook and bishop.

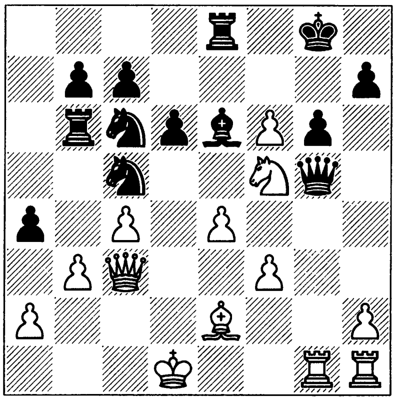
Shirov has also been generous enough to give some draws and even some losses. It's ironic that one of these (against Vassily Ivanchuk at Wijk aan Zee 1996, which is in the chapter on the Anti-Meran) contains one of the best moves of the book: Ivanchuk's extraordinary 21 Qg7!!.

I may have given the impression that *Fire on Board* contains unremitting violence from cover to cover. This of course is quite untrue. In the introduction, Shirov makes it clear that he considers himself to be, above all, a calculator. This skill is particularly useful in the endgame in which the simplified material often gives rise to long forced lines. And while technical games are heavily outnumbered, they do arise outside the endgame chapter at the end of the book: particularly in the more recent games, for example the powerful double rook ending against Michael Adams (game 76); or the positional win against Jan Timman (game 65). Though as Alexei himself writes: "It is not every day that I win a positional game like this".

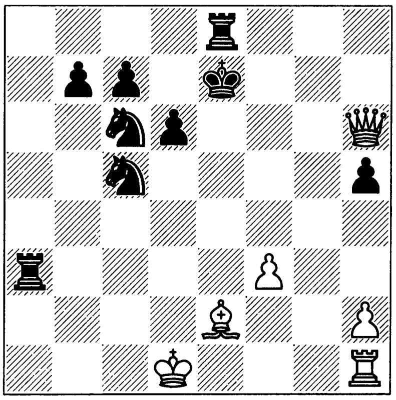
Fire on Board is an extraordinarily rich book. And I can only hope that the reader will get as much pleasure out of it as me. There was just one slight disappointment; and really it only illustrates the immense quantity of games at Shirov's disposal. Here is a game from the Moscow Olympiad which his opponent, Bogdan Lalić, showed me at the time. True, Shirov didn't win this game. But you need an incredible oeuvre to overlook it in your collection of best games!

Lalić – Shirov
Moscow Olympiad 1994

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♗b4 3 ♘d5 ♗e7 4 d4 d6 5 e4 ♘f6 6 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 7 f3 exd4 8 ♕xd4 ♘c6 9 ♕c3 0-0 10 ♘e2 ♘h5 11 g4 ♕h4+ 12 ♔d1 ♘f6 13 ♘g3 ♗e6 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 15 ♗e2 a5 16 ♔d2 ♘c5 17 b3 ♖fe8 18 ♖ag1 f6 19 ♔c1 ♖a6 20 ♔d1 ♖b6 21 g5 a4 22 gxf6 g6 23 ♗g5 ♕xg5 24 ♘f5

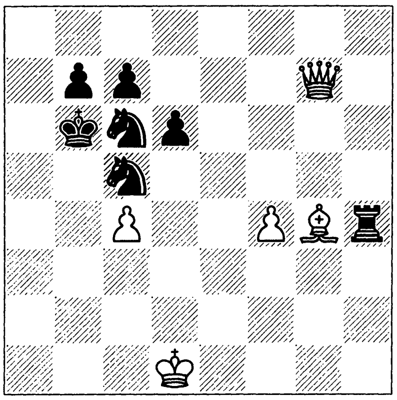


24...♕xf5 25 exf5 ♗xf5 26 ♖g5 ♔f7 27 ♖xf5 axb3 28 ♖h5 gxh5 29 axb3 ♖xb3 30 ♕c2 ♔xf6 31 ♕xh7 ♖a3 32 ♕h6+ ♔e7



33 ♕g7+ ♔d8 34 ♖g1 ♘a4 35 ♕f6+ ♔c8 36 ♖g8 ♖xg8 37 ♕e6+ ♔b8 38 ♕xg8+ ♔a7 39 ♕g7 ♔b6 40 h4 ♘c5 41 f4 ♖h3 42 ♗xh5 ♖xh4 43 ♗g4

B



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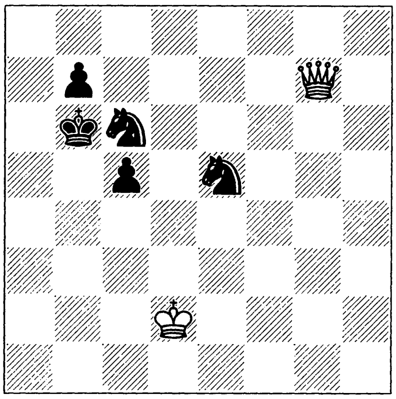


43...♘a5 44 ♕c3 ♘ab3 45 ♕f3 ♘d4 46 ♕g2 ♖h8 47 f5 ♖f8 48 ♕f2 ♘c6 49 f6 ♘e5 50 ♗h5 ♘xc4 51 f7 c6 52 ♕f4 ♘e5 53 ♕h6 ♖xf7 54 ♗xf7 ♘xf7 55 ♕f6 ♘e5 56 ♕xd6 ♘cd3 57 ♕e7 c5 58 ♔d2 ♘c6 59 ♕g7 ♘de5 60 ♔c3 ♔a6 61 ♕f8 b6 62 ♕a8+ ♔b5 63 ♕e8 c4 64 ♕g8 ½-½

Jonathan Speelman

Introduction

The idea of writing a chess book occurred to me a long time ago, but it had always seemed very difficult to realize it. So in December 1993 when Andrew Kinsman, who was then the commissioning chess editor at Cadogan Books, asked me whether I was planning to write a book, I started thinking more seriously about it. In March 1994 I accepted his official proposal and promised to complete this work by the end of 1994.

Easier said than done! I had of course realized that other chessplayers slowed down their chess activities while they were writing a book, but this was a real problem for me, as my chess calendar was always so full of tournaments. Besides, on the 27th of November my daughter was born, so I had to adapt to a new lifestyle. To add to the problems, my notebook was stolen in January 1995 so, with no backup, a good deal of my work was lost forever.

Slowly, step by step, I had to restart my work on the book. First I collected some of my relatively old annotations from various magazines and tried to make complimentary comments and corrections to them (these are marked in the text with the initials *AS*, which should be taken to mean 'addition') as Kasparov did in his *The Test of Time*. But then I noticed that some of the most important games had only been annotated in *Informator*-style, which in no sense made my task any easier. Other games that I wanted very much to include had not been annotated at all, so I had to make completely new notes, and of course I also wanted to include games from my most recent tournaments. Fortunately, in the second half of 1995 I started working with the *ChessBase for Windows* program and my work became much easier.

When annotating the games I have attempted to explain their principal strategic themes, but my favourite subject has always been tactical complexity. The search for the truth in sharp and concrete games with a lot of tactics has always fascinated me, although my busy schedule didn't permit me to go deep inside every game in the book. Therefore they are annotated differently – some have relatively brief explanations, others very extensive analysis. Sometimes I have checked variations with *Fritz4* in an attempt to make my analysis as precise as possible. However, I have found it useless to point out which moves were suggested by *Fritz*, because when a grandmaster works with a chessplaying program, he has to extract its variation tree from a lot of rubbish and ultimately his work becomes highly individual anyway. I believe that in the end I have found a reasonable combination of the human and electronic brains and that the computer has not influenced my annotations in the wrong way. But that is really for the reader to judge for himself.

Now I would like to say a few words about my chess style. When I was just a boy, I was fascinated by Mikhail Tal's games and Alexander Koblents's books, both of which were full of tactics. These two maestros have had a great influence on the Latvian school of chess, of which probably Alexander Shabalov and myself are the 'purest' products since we both show a lot of creativity in our games. However, I have always tried to be not just a tactician – working with a positional player such as Bagirov and studying hard has helped me to develop my own strategic understanding, though chess is nowadays so concrete that pure strategy practically doesn't exist for me. I just try to know typical middlegame ideas that might always be useful, and I am quite confident in my endgame ability, even against the world's leading endgame experts, such as Karpov and Salov. I more often gain than lose points at that stage of the game (taking into account the positions that have arisen at the start of the ending, of course!). In fact I believe that the endgame is my strongest area, perhaps because I am a player with a very concrete style.

In my selection of games for this book I have chosen first of all the most memorable, and only then the best games. I think that the games which hold the most pleasant memories are the ones that best demonstrate my approach to chess, and I hope that the reader will also enjoy them. If you want to become involved in a world of unusual ideas, sacrifices, sharp moves and sometimes strange errors, then I believe that this is the book for you.

Alexei Shirov
Tarragona, October 1996

1 Growing Up (1979-1987)

I was born into a Russian family on 4 July 1972 in Riga, the capital of Latvia. At that time Latvia was still a Soviet Republic, so Russian-speaking children grew up not really having to speak Latvian, which was in any case badly taught in school. The fact that I never learned Latvian properly might easily have affected my public relations in the country but fortunately it never caused me any problems with Latvian chessplayers. Anyway, now that I live in, am a citizen of and represent Spain, I can send that problem to the past.

When I was between four and five my elder brother tried to teach me the rules of chess. I learned, tried to play and then forgot the rules completely. It was hard to predict that one day I would become a professional player. Some time afterwards I learned to play draughts and began to beat my friends regularly. My brother then made another attempt with chess and I suddenly realized that it was more fun when the pieces could move differently. Draughts was soon abandoned and in March 1979 my chess 'career' started.

First my brother and then my father (a player with a Latvian rating of around 2000) grew tired of playing with me and in May 1979 I was taken to the chess school. There I received tuition from Latvian woman master Viya Rozhlapa, who was quite good at teaching children to play. (She is still encouraging new talent and every year I examine the best of them in a clock simultaneous.)

I cannot say that I made incredibly rapid progress at this time, but in my opinion the most important thing was that chess had captured my imagination and my childhood in chess was no less fascinating than that of any other child. My other hobby at that time was reading about all the countries of the world and when, for example, I heard on the radio news that Karpov was playing in Mar del Plata, my sense of fantasy was evoked. I dare say that in those early years my prime motivation to improve my chess was to have the opportunity to travel all over the world rather than just to achieve success in tournaments.

I am unable to offer any reasonable games that I played between 1979 and 1982, but the following game, played in October 1983, is probably a deserving one to start this book with.

Game 1
Shirov – Zhuravlev
Riga 1983

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

This was the first game of a mini-training match organized by Alexander Koblents. The late trainer was famous for his work with Mikhail Tal leading up to the latter's World Championship title victory. But very few people appreciated how much of his life he devoted to helping young players to develop. I should mention that Koblents's books were my favourite chess books in those years.

My opponent in this game, Valery Zhuravlev, is an experienced international master who was Latvian Champion several times and played for Latvia in the 1994 Olympiad in Moscow. He made one grandmaster norm in the 1970s but had very few opportunities to score another. His rating is currently around 2460.

1 e4 e6
2 d4 d5
3 ♘c3 dxe4
4 ♘xe4 ♘d7

Zhuravlev obviously believed that the easiest way to play against a boy is to keep things simple, but in fact this strategy just gives me fewer chances to go wrong. In the second game Zhuravlev played a more complicated opening and you could say that I lost without a fight.

5 ♘f3 ♘gf6
6 ♗d3 ♘xe4
7 ♗xe4 ♘f6
8 ♗d3

Anand played 8 ♗g5 against Vaganian (Riga 1995) and won convincingly after 8...♗e7 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 (9...♗xf6 looks more natural but the bishop c8 is still not active enough) 10 ♕e2 etc. The idea of 8 ♗g5 followed by exchanging a bishop for a knight looks very logical from a strategic point of view.

8 ... c5
9 0-0

Nowadays I would probably prefer 9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 ♗g5, with a mind to castling queenside.

9 ... cxd4
10 ♘xd4 ♗e7

Why play so passively? It looks more natural to play 10...♗c5 11 ♘b3 ♗b6 or 11 ♗e3 ♗b6.

11 ♗f4 0-0
12 ♖e1

12 c4 was interesting.

12 ... ♕b6

Obviously the knight has been taboo for a long time (12...♕xd4 13 ♗xh7+), but 12...♘d5 deserved consideration.

13 ♗e5 ♗d7
14 ♖e3

Being 11 years old I liked, of course, to play directly against the enemy king. In this position it is also quite logical.

14 ... ♖fd8
15 ♖h3 g6?!

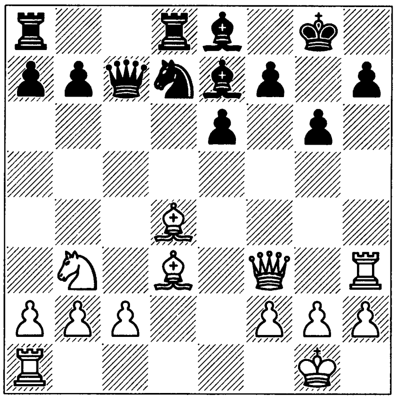
I expected 15...h6, after which I intended 16 ♖g3. However, it does not appear that White stands better after 16...♗e8 since Black has good counterplay in the centre and there is no danger of a quick mate yet.

16 ♕f3 ♗e8
17 ♘b3

It's clear that nothing good would come from 17 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18 ♕xf6 ♕xd4. Still, at this point I had not foreseen the forthcoming variations.

17 ... ♘d7
18 ♗d4 ♕c7

W



19 ♖xh7

The logical continuation, else Black can play 19...e5.

19 ... e5
20 ♗xg6!?

How could I resist sacrificing a second piece in a row? Nowadays I would probably prefer 20 ♕h3 ♗f6 (20...exd4 loses to 21 ♖h8+ ♔g7 22 ♕h6+ ♔f6 23 ♖e1 ♘e5 24 ♖g8 ♘xd3 25 ♕h4+ ♔f5 26 g4+ ♔f4 27 ♕g3+ winning) 21 ♗e3 ♘f8 22 ♖h6 with a slight advantage.

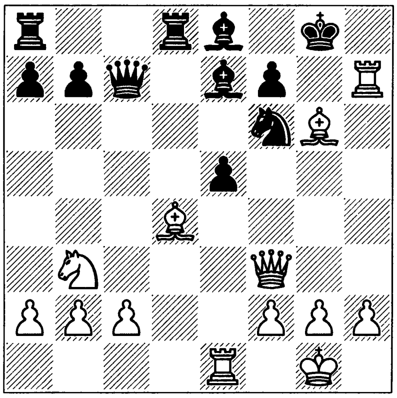
20 ... ♘f6

Zhuravlev obviously doesn't believe White's attack, otherwise he would have chosen 20...fxg6 21 ♖xe7 and not now 21...exd4 22 ♕d5+ ♔f8 23 ♕xd4 ♔xe7 24 ♕g7+ ♔e6 (24...♔d6 25 ♖d1+ ♔c6 26 ♕c3+ ♔b6 27 ♕a5+ ♔c6 28 ♘d4+; and 24...♗f7 25 ♖e1+ ♔d6 26 ♕xf7 ♕xc2 27 ♕e7+ ♔c7 28 ♘d4 both win for White) 25 ♘d4+ ♔d5 26 ♖d1! and White's attack seems decisive, but 21...♕d6! 22 ♖xe8+ (there is nothing better) 22...♖xe8 23 ♗e3 e4 24 ♕e2 with only an edge for White.

But now it seems that all White's pieces are hanging. The natural 21 ♕g3? fails to 21...fxg6 22 ♗xe5 ♕d7!, threatening 23...♕d1+, when Black turns the tables. I must admit that I did not see this during the game, but fate saved me from this variation. White does have a move, however, and it works!

21 ♖e1!

B



All three pieces are still hanging but the threat of 22 ♗xe5 makes White's attack decisive.

21 ... ♖xd4

Clearly lines such as 21...fxg6 22 ♗xe5 ♕d7 23 ♗xf6 and 21...♘xh7 22 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 23 ♕h5+ ♔g8 24 ♗xe5 lose quickly. What I had to calculate was 21...exd4 22 ♕h3 ♕f4 (22...fxg6 23 ♖exe7 wins) 23 ♖xe7 ♘xh7 24 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 25 ♖xb7 ♕f6 (25...♗d7 26 g3 ♕f6 27 ♘c5 or 26...♕f3 27 ♗e4 win for White) 26 ♘c5 ♖d6 (26...♕xg6 27 ♕h8+ ♕g8 28 ♘e6+ fxe6 29 ♕h6+ also wins) 27 ♘e4 ♕xg6 28 ♕h8+ ♕g8 29 ♕xg8+ ♔xg8 30 ♘xd6 and White wins.

22 ♘xd4 ♘xh7

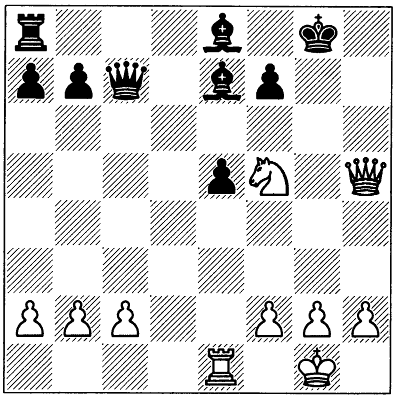
The best practical try would have been 22...exd4 23 ♕h3 ♕f4, although after 24 ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 25 ♖h8+ ♔g7 26 ♖xa8 White has a clear edge.

23 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7
24 ♕h5+ ♔g8
25 ♘f5 *(D)* **1-0**

Here my opponent overstepped the time limit. In any case Black has no defence, for example 25...f6 26 ♕g4+ ♔f7 27 ♘h6+ or 25...♗f6 26 ♖e3 winning.

Mikhail Tal was impressed with this game and a few weeks later I got to know him personally. I was still too weak to understand his chess ideas at that time but I remember being covered in smoke (approximately ten cigarettes an hour).

B



My first real success at master level was sharing third and fourth places in the Latvian Championship which was held in Riga in March 1986 (first place was taken by Yanis Klovans, while second was Alvis Vitolinš. However, my result (7½/13) was insufficient for the Soviet master title. I had an up and down tournament, beginning with two draws, then winning three in a row, losing four and winning three in a row again. My most memorable game from that event was again against Zhuravlev.

Game 2

Shirov – Zhuravlev

Latvian Championship, Riga 1986

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

1 d4 d5
2 ♘c3!? f5
3 g4!?

This was not improvisation, as I knew some games in which White had played this gambit. It suited my style at that time (I liked sharp stuff) but in fact it is not a great opening.

Later I had an unfortunate experience with it and stopped playing g2-g4 at such an early stage.

3 ... fxg4
4 ♗f4

After 4 h3, 4...g3 5 fxg3 ♘f6 gives Black a good game.

4 ... ♘f6
5 h3 c6

There is nothing wrong with 5...♗f5.

6 ♕d3!? ♘a6
7 0-0-0 ♕a5
8 ♕e3!

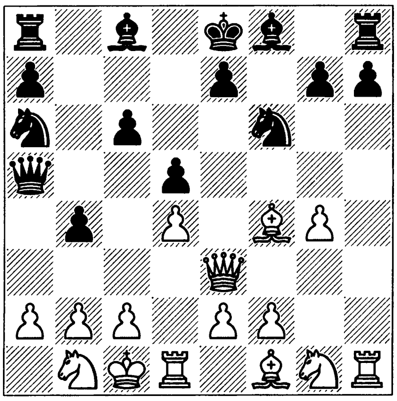
The only move as 8 a3? b5 and 8 ♔b1?! b5 are unsatisfactory.

8 ... b5?!

Very optimistic. I prefer 8...♗f5 9 hxg4 ♘xg4 10 ♕g3 ♘f6 (with the idea of 11 ♗h3 ♘e4) when Black has nothing to fear.

9 hxg4 b4
10 ♘b1

B



10 ... ♕xa2?

10...♘xg4 11 ♕g3 ♘f6 12 ♗h3 looks quite unclear.

11 ♗h3!

11 g5 could be answered by 11...b3!, for example 12 ♘c3 (12 c3 ♗f5 13 ♖d3 ♘e4! with the idea of ...♘xc3 is very complicated) 12...♕a1+ (12...♘g4 allows White a good ending after 13 ♘xa2 ♘xe3 14 fxe3! bxa2 15 ♔d2) 13 ♔d2 ♕xb2 14 gxf6 gxf6 15 ♗h3! with chances for both sides.

11 ... b3
12 c3 ♘xg4

If 12...♗xg4 then 13 ♘f3 with good attacking prospects.

13 ♕g3 ♗f5
14 ♖d3 h5

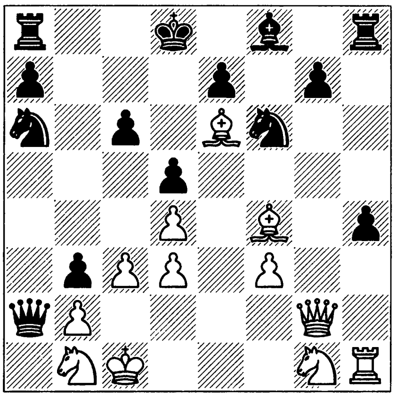
14...♗xd3 15 exd3 ♘f6 16 ♗e6 with the idea of 17 ♘f3 also looks terrible for Black.

15 f3??

Hasty and weak. After 15 ♘f3 it has hard to offer good advice to Black as his pieces are completely out of play. Now the battle rages into life once again.

15 ... h4!
16 ♕g2 ♗xd3
17 exd3 ♘f6
18 ♗e6 ♔d8!

W



This is what I had missed. Black manages to exchange one of his bad pieces for an attacking one.

19 ♘h3

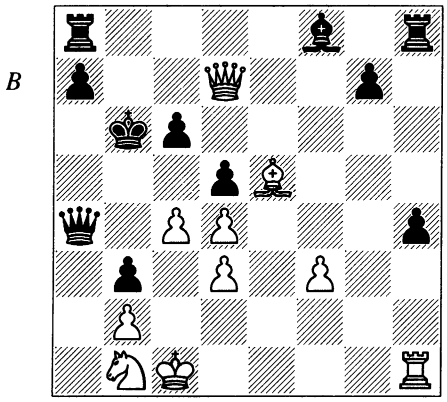
If 19 ♕h2 then 19...♕a5 holds.

19 ... ♘c7
20 ♘g5 ♘xe6
21 ♘xe6+ ♔c8
22 ♕h3 ♔b7
23 ♘c5+ ♔b6
24 ♘d7+ ♘xd7

After 24...♔a6 25 ♘c5+ ♔b6 White has a choice between 26 ♘d7+, repeating the position, or 26 ♕e6 with unclear chances. The text is better.

25 ♕xd7 e5!
26 ♗xe5 ♕a4
27 c4!? *(D)*
27 ... ♗b4?

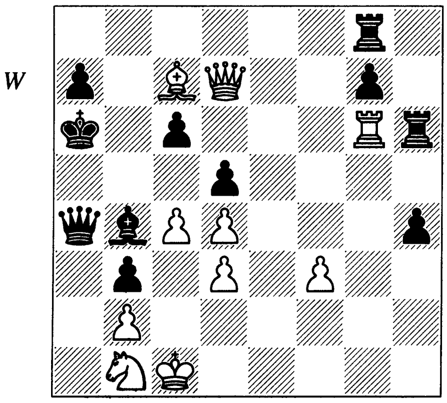
This natural move leads to serious problems for Black when 27...♖h6! would have promised him excellent prospects. I cannot see anything better for White than 28 ♘c3 ♕a1+ 29 ♘b1 ♗b4! 30 ♕xg7 ♖e6 31 f4!? with dubious compensation for the exchange.



28 ♖g1 ♖ag8?

The fatal error. Although 28...♖hg8? 29 ♗c7+ ♔a6 30 ♖g6 would have been no improvement, 28...g5! 29 ♗xh8 (29 ♖xg5? ♖hg8) 29...♖xh8 30 ♖xg5 ♗f8! would have retained drawing chances, for example 31 ♖xd5 ♖g8! or 31 ♖g6 dxc4! 32 d5 ♖h6! and White has nothing better than perpetual.

29 ♗c7+ ♔a6
30 ♖g6 ♖h6



31 ♗b8!

The point.

31 ... ♖xb8
32 ♖xg7 1-0

Black lost on time, but there is no defence against mate in a few moves. Not a perfect game, but still one that gave me a lot of aesthetic pleasure. 'Congratulations on your nice play,' said Alvis Vitolinš, who is himself another Latvian master of sacrifice.

For a long time I had no regular coach, although I analysed a great deal with different Latvian players, and in particular I should mention Igor Rausis, who is now a grandmaster. With his help I studied the Arkhangelsk Variation of the Spanish Opening, with which I later played many interesting games. At the end of 1986 I began working with grandmaster Vladimir Bagirov, who has trained many leading Latvian players including Mikhail Tal. I believe that this was a turning point in my chess career and I soon began to make much faster progress.

In January 1987 I came third in the Soviet Under-18 Championship in Kapsukas (nowadays called Mariampole) with 8 out of 11 in a Swiss system tournament. First on tie-break was 12-year-old(!) Gata Kamsky (long before he moved to the USA) ahead of Boris Alterman (who now represents Israel), both of whom scored 9 points. The reader will find some of my games from Kapsukas elsewhere in this book.

One month later I lost a match against Kamsky to decide who would participate in the World Under-16, which was a disappointing setback. However, in March I again came third in the Latvian Championship with 8 out of 13 (first was Edvins Kengis, second Alexander Shabalov).

Here is one of my games from that event.

Game 3
Klovans – Shirov
Latvian Championship, Riga 1987

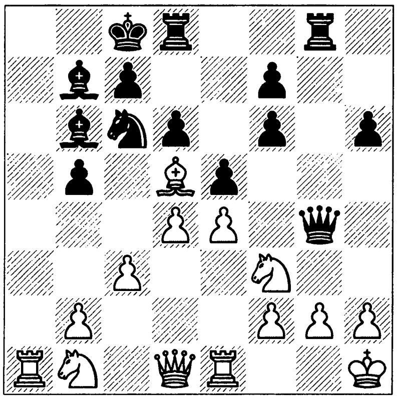
These annotations were made in March 1987 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga*.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 b5 6 ♗b3 ♗b7 7 ♖e1 ♗c5 8 c3 d6 9 d4 ♗b6 10 ♗g5

A plan that Yanis Klovans had successfully employed previously.

10...h6 11 ♗h4 ♕d7 12 a4 0-0-0 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♗d5 ♖hg8 16 ♔h1 ♕g4!?

Klovans-Malaniuk, Lvov 1984, continued 16...♘e7?!, and after 17 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 18 ♘bd2 White achieved the better game. The immediate attack on the white centre looks more promising.

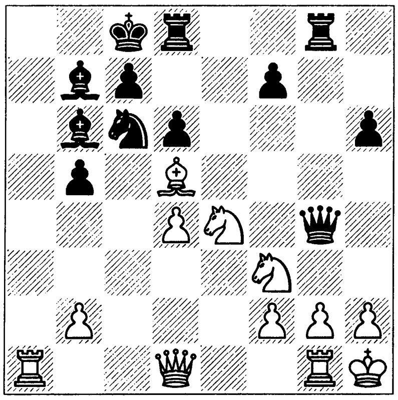


17 ♖g1

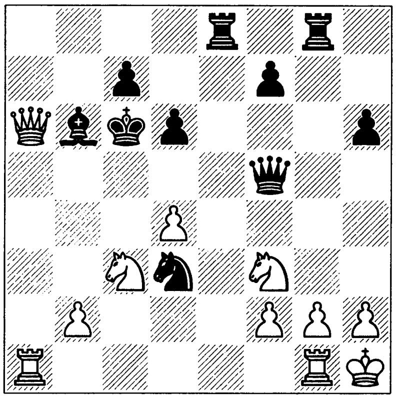
Not 17 g3?! f5.

[AS – A few months after this game Klovans demonstrated to me that 17 g3 f5?! 18 ♘bd2! exd4 19 ♕b3! dxc3 20 bxc3 is nearly winning for White. His recommendation was tried in the correspondence game Vitomskis-Stashans (Latvia 1987-88) which White won. All this forced me to look for another line and later on I played some games with 12...♕e7 (instead of 12...♕d7).]

17...exd4 18 cxd4 f5! 19 ♘c3 fxe4 20 ♘xe4

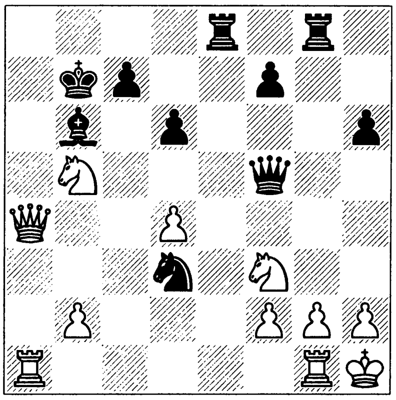


The game Ulybin-Shirov, played two months earlier (USSR Junior Championship, Kapsukas 1987), went 20 ♗xe4 ♖de8 21 ♗d5 ♔b8?! 22 ♘xb5 ♕f5 23 ♘c3 ♘b4 24 ♗xb7 ♔xb7 25 ♕a4 ♘d3 26 ♕a6+ ♔c6 *(D)*



Here White was unable to exploit the position of the enemy king, and after 27 ♖gf1 ♖a8 28 ♕c4+ ♔b7 the position became equal.

Instead of 21...♔b8?!, it would have been sounder to play 21...♘b4, for example, 22 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 23 ♘xb5 ♕f5 24 ♕a4 ♘d3 *(D)*



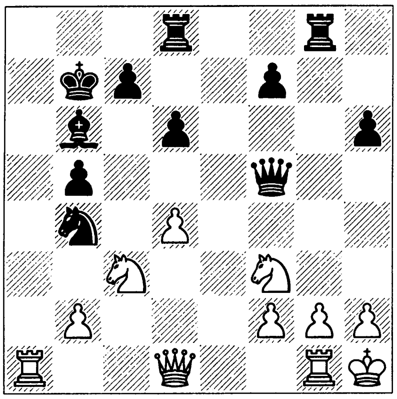
Compared with the previous diagram, the white knight is less well placed at b5. Now 25 ♕a6+ ♔c6 26 ♘a7+ ♔d7 is dangerous for White, while the variation 25 ♘xd6+ cxd6 26 ♕a6+ ♔c7 27 ♖gc1+ ♗c5! 28 dxc5 ♘xf2+ 29 ♔g1 ♘h3+ 30 ♔h1 (30

♔f1? ♕xf3+ 31 gxf3 ♖g1 mate) 30...♘f2+ leads to a draw by perpetual check.

20...♕f5 21 ♘c3 ♘b4 22 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7

By now Black has solved all his problems.

W



23 ♖a3 ♖de8 24 ♖b3 ♘d3 25 ♘e4 ♕xe4 26 ♖xd3 ♕d5 27 ♖e1 ♖xe1+

Black could have consolidated his slight advantage by 27...♖e6!?

28 ♕xe1 ♖g4 29 ♕d2 h5 30 h3 ♖e4 31 ♔g1

The position is level. But Black's subsequent play in his opponent's time-trouble is anything but successful.

31...♕a2 32 ♕c2 ♕d5 33 ♕d2 f5?! 34 ♕d1 f4 35 ♕d2 ♕f5 36 ♕d1 ♖e8 37 ♔f1 ♖a8 38 ♖d2 ♖g8 39 ♕b3 ♖e8 40 ♔g1 ♖a8 41 ♖d1 ♖e8 ½-½

Here the time-trouble came to an end. White's position is now slightly better, but it is doubtful whether he can extract any real gains from this. For example: 42 d5 ♖g8 43 ♔f1 ♕g6 44 ♘e1 ♕e8 45 ♖c1 ♖g5! with equal chances. Therefore a **draw** was agreed.

2 Winning the World Cadet (1988)

My aim for 1988 was to qualify for the World Cadet (Under-16) Championship, following my disappointment the year before. At that time I had the best possible opportunities to improve that Latvia could offer. I continued working with Bagirov, analysed with Tal, Shabalov, Kengis, Klovans and others, and also began working with Zigurds Lanka (who is now a grandmaster). Having obtained the Soviet master title in 1987 I was full of confidence but was not yet able to study chess full-time as I was still attending secondary school.

In January 1988 I again finished third in the Soviet Junior Championship in Ivano-Frankovski with the same score of 8 out of 11. (First was Mikhail Ulybin and second Gata Kamsky, both with 8½/11.) I again lost to Gata and although the tournament was not a direct qualifier for the World Cadet, my ambitions were dented.

My next major event was a qualifier for the World Junior (Under-20) Championship, held at Borzhomi in April. Kamsky was there as well, so I knew I had to finish a least half a point in front of him to get into the World Under-16. If I failed, my chances of making a real chess career in the Soviet Union would have been seriously damaged (for example, Kamsky's father decided to defect with his son to the USA in 1989 in search of a better destiny).

No wonder I made a nervous start to the Borzhomi event, making two draws from completely winning positions against Ulybin and Kamsky. However, I then managed to calm down and win four games against Dreyev, Akopian, Komarov and Smirin. Before the last round Dreyev and I both had 6½/9, but I lost in the last round to Dzandzghava and Dreyev came first. Still, second place, two and a half points ahead of Kamsky in a tournament in which all 11 participants have since become grandmasters was a great achievement. Now I was free to prepare for the World Cadet Championship which was to be held in July-August 1988 in Timisoara, Romania.

Game 4

Khenkin – Shirov

Borzhomi 1988

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 45*.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 d5

This move marks the venerable Petrosian system, which still has its followers today, such as Vladimir Kramnik and Miguel Illescas. Yours truly tried it once in 1994 but without success.

7...a5 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 ♘a6 10 ♘d2 ♕e8 11 0-0 ♘h7 12 a3 ♗d7 13 b3

Illescas and Kramnik prefer 13 ♔h1, after which the best move is probably 13...h5.

13...f5

Of course 13...h5 is also possible here, but I wanted to demonstrate a clear path to equality that I had prepared at home.

14 exf5

14 f3 ♘f6 is fine for Black.

14...♗xf5

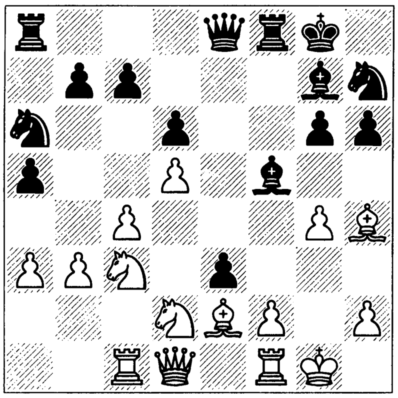
14...gxf5, which leads to a very unclear position after 15 ♗h5 ♕c8 16 ♗e7 ♖e8 17 ♗xe8 ♕xe8 18 ♗h4, was introduced by Kasparov against Yusupov in the Barcelona World Cup in 1989.

15 g4 e4 16 ♖c1 e3 *(D)*

17 fxe3

17 gxf5 exd2 18 ♕xd2 ♘c5 19 ♕d1 ♖xf5 20 ♗g4 ♖f4 21 ♖e1?! ♕xe1+ 22 ♕xe1 ♖xg4+ 23 ♗g3 ♘g5 24 ♕e2 h5 proved to be very dangerous for White in the games Naumkin-I. Belov (Moscow 1984) and Av. Bykhovsky-I. Belov (Pula 1988).

W



17...♕xe3+

Also interesting is 17...♗d7!? 18 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8!

18 ♗f2 ♕g5 19 ♔h1

My idea was to answer 19 h4 with 19...♕f4 20 gxf5 ♗e5 21 ♘f3 ♕g4+ 22 ♔h1 ♕h3+ leading to a draw by perpetual. Khenkin decides to go for more.

19...♗d7 20 ♘de4 ♕e7

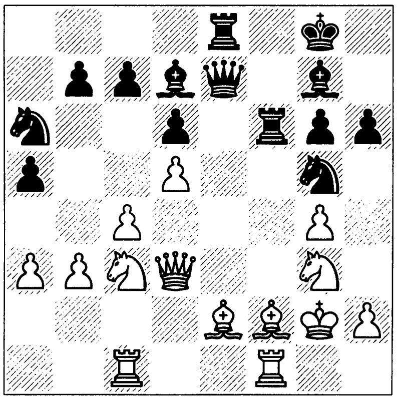
The position is equal.

21 ♕d3 ♖ae8 22 ♘g3

22 ♔g2!? was worth consideration.

22...♖f6 23 ♔g2 ♘g5

W



24 ♗d4 ♘c5! 25 ♗xf6

Otherwise White stands worse.

25...♘xd3 26 ♗xe7 ♘xc1 27 ♗xg5 ♘xe2 28 ♘gxe2 hxg5 29 h3

The position has simplified by force and I thought that I now held the advantage due to the bishop pair. But in fact Black's light-squared bishop is not sufficiently active and it is practically impossible to generate any winning chances.

29...c6

Threatening 30...b5.

30 a4 cxd5 31 cxd5 ♗e5

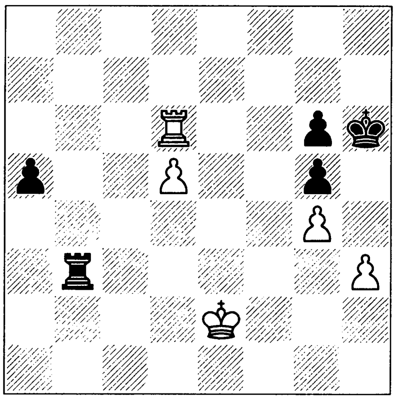
31...♖c8 32 ♖f3 ♖c5 33 ♖d3 does not promise Black anything.

32 ♖f3 ♔g7 33 ♔f2 b5 34 axb5 ♖b8 35 ♘e4! ♔h6 36 ♖f7 ♗xb5 37 ♘f6!

Now White starts to play for a win, but there are no real chances.

37...♗xf6 38 ♖xf6 ♗xe2 39 ♔xe2 ♖xb3 40 ♖xd6

B



40...a4?!

Of course 40...♖xh3 41 ♖a6 ♔g7 was simpler.

41 ♖a6 ♔g7

A more complicated way to draw was 41...♖b5 42 d6 ♖d5 43 ♔e3 a3 44 ♔e4 ♖d2 45 ♔e5 a2 46 ♔e6 ♖e2+ 47 ♔f7 ♖d2! (not 47...♖f2+? 48 ♔g8 ♖d2 49 ♖a7 a1♕ 50 ♖h7 mate) 48 ♔e7 ♖e2+ 49 ♔d8 ♔g7 50 d7 ♔f7.

42 ♖xa4 ♖xh3 43 ♖e4

It seems that White has achieved a great deal by cutting off the black king, but Black can still draw.

43...♖a3 44 d6 ♔f7 45 ♖d4 ♖a8 46 ♖d5 ♔e6 47 ♖xg5 ♔xd6 48 ♖xg6+ ♔e5 49 ♔f3 ♖a3+ ½-½

I was fortunate enough to be able to prepare for Timisoara with Mikhail Tal who was at the same time preparing for the Soviet Championship (from which he later withdrew due to health problems).

Several leading Latvian players and the Russian grandmaster Evgeny Sveshnikov also participated in that training session and when I left for Romania (with Vladimir Bagirov as my trainer) I was confident that I would win. I started relatively poorly with 3 out of 4, but then won the last seven games in a row and finished clear first. Second was the American Ilya Gurevich with 8½ out of 11 and the Frenchman Joel Lautier was third with 7½.

My victory over Lautier in round nine from a precarious position practically decided the tournament.

Game 5

Shirov – Lautier

World Cadet Championship, Timisoara 1988

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *New in Chess Yearbook 11.*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♗d3 ♘c6 6 ♘e2

A line which was successfully practised by Kasparov around that time. Later its popularity began to drop off and I was surprised that it reappeared in the Candidates' matches Salov-Timman (Sanghi Nagar 1994) and Kamsky-Short (Linares 1994).

6...cxd4 7 exd4 d5 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗c2 ♗d6

Probably best. 10...♖e8 11 ♕d3 g6 12 ♖d1 ♗f8 13 ♕f3 is less convincing but 10...♕h4!? also deserves attention.

11 ♘e4

11 ♕d3?! is met by 11...♕h4.

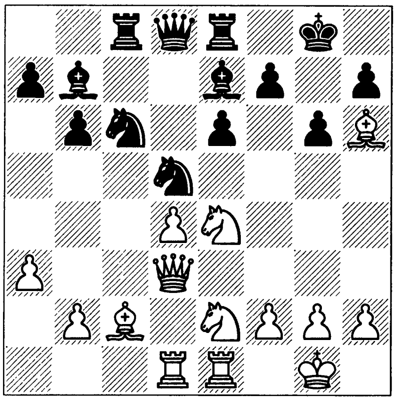
11...♗e7 12 a3 b6

This looks more accurate than either 12...♕b6?! (Salov-Timman, Sanghi Nagar 1994) or 12...♖e8 (Kamsky-Short, Linares 1994). However, 12...e5!? seems completely equal to me.

13 ♕d3 g6 14 ♗h6 ♖e8 15 ♖fe1!?

This move was a novelty though I was under the misapprehension that 10...♗d6 was already a new move. 15 ♖ac1 ♗b7 16 ♖fd1 ♖c8 had occurred in the game Semkov-Psakhis, Erevan 1988.

15...♗b7 16 ♖ad1 ♖c8



17 ♘2c3 a6?!

Psakhis played 17...♘a5! against me two months later at Klaipeda and gained an advantage after 18 ♕g3 ♘c4 19 ♗a4 ♗c6 20 ♗b3 ♘xc3! 21 bxc3? (correct was 21 ♘xc3 when Black could choose between 21...♗d6 22 ♗f4 ♗xf4 23 ♕xf4 ♕d6! 24 ♕xd6 ♘xd6 25 d5 exd5 with equality and 21...♗d5!? with unclear complications) 21...♗xe4! 22 ♖xe4 ♘d6.

18 ♕g3! ♗h4

18...♘f6 could have been met by 19 ♘g5 (threatening 20 ♘xe6 fxe6 21 ♗xg6 winning) 19...♗d6 (19...♘h5 20 ♕g4 f5?! 21 ♗b3! ♗xg5 [not 21...fxg4? 22 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 23 ♘f7+] 22 ♕xg5 with a clear advantage) 20 ♕f3 ♖c7 21 ♘ce4 ♘xe4 22 ♗xe4 with the advantage.

19 ♕h3 ♗e7 20 ♖d3?

A serious mistake after which Black is able to seize the initiative.

I should have played 20 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 (perhaps 20...exd5 is better, but after 21 ♘c3, with the idea of 22 ♗f5!, White retains an edge) 21 ♘c3 ♕d6 22 d5 exd5 23 ♖xd5 ♗f8 24 ♖e4 ♖xe4 25 ♘xe4 ♕e6 26 ♕xe6 fxe6 27 ♘f6+ ♔f7 28 ♖d7+ ♘e7 (28...♔xf6 29 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 30 ♖xb7 is also in White's favour) 29 ♗xf8 ♖xc2 30 h4 and White is on top.

20...f5! 21 ♘g3 ♗f6 22 ♘ge2 ♕d7

22...♕d6 was also possible, when Black stands slightly better.

23 ♖ed1! ♘a5 24 ♘f4

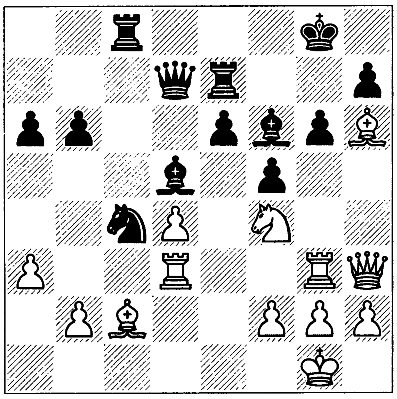
If White does not do anything he is strategically lost because of the isolated pawn and weak queenside. An attack on the enemy king is his only chance.

24...♘c4

24...♘xf4 25 ♗xf4 ♘c4 26 ♗c1 b5 would also have given Black a small advantage.

25 ♘cxd5 ♗xd5 26 ♖g3 ♖e7 27 ♖dd3

B



White consistently carries out his plan but it still doesn't seem convincing. Possibly Lautier thought that his task (he needed to win) was already rather easy. If so, this probably cost him the game.

27...♘d6

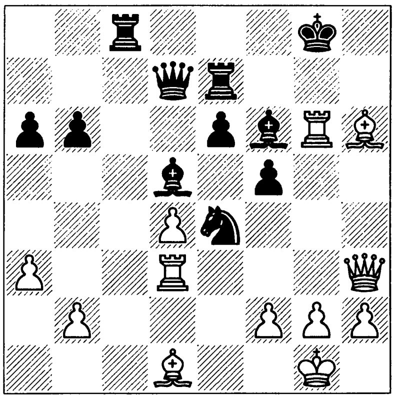
The first inaccuracy. 27...♘xb2! would have left Black with the better prospects after 28 ♘xg6 hxg6 29 ♖xg6+ ♗g7 30 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 31 ♖dg3 ♖xc2 32 ♕h6 ♖c7 33 h4 ♕e7 34 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7.

28 ♗d1 ♘e4 29 ♘xg6

The only move.

29...hxg6 30 ♖xg6+ *(D)*

B



30...♗g7?

A very bad mistake, After 30...♖g7! I would have been in severe difficulties in time-trouble (something like five minutes for ten moves). Only after long post-game analysis did I find 31 ♖xf6! ♘xf6 32 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 33 ♖g3 ♘g4 34 ♕h5 ♖c1 (34...♔f8 35 ♗xg4 fxg4 36 h3 gives White sufficient compensation for the piece) 35 ♕e8+ ♔h7 36 ♕h5+ ♕h6 37 ♕f7+ ♔h8 38 ♕e8+ ♔g7 39 ♕e7+ ♔g6 40 ♕e8+ ♔g5 (40...♔f6 41 ♕d8+ is equal) 41 ♕g8+ ♕g6 (41...♔f4?? 42 ♖xg4+ fxg4 43 ♕xg4 mate) 42 ♕d8+ ♔f4 43 ♕d6+ ♔g5 (43...e5? 44 ♖xg4+ ♕xg4 45 ♕h6+ ♕g5 46 g3+ ♔e4 47 ♕xg5 ♖xd1+ 48 ♔g2 ♔xd4+ 49 ♔h3 wins and 43...♔e4? 44 f3+ ♔d3 [44...♔xd4 45 ♕f4+] 45 fxg4+ ♔d2 46 ♕f4+ ♔xd1 47 ♕f2 ♖c2 48 ♕f1+ ♔d2 49 ♖d3 leads to mate) 44 ♕d8+ with a draw by perpetual check.

31 ♕h4!

Now White is winning.

31...♗c4

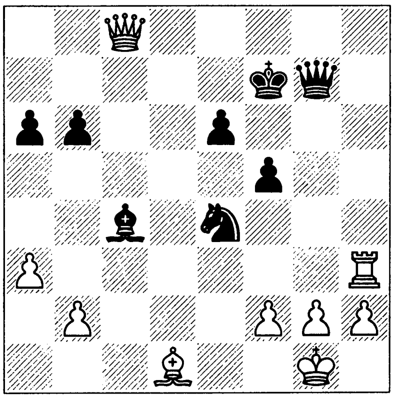
This loses by force but 31...♕e8 32 ♕h5 ♘f6 33 ♕g5 ♕f8 34 ♖g3 ♘g4 35 f3! ♘xh6 36 ♖xh6 f4 37 ♖g4 ♖c1 38 ♕h5! ♖xd1+ 39 ♔f2 also wins for White.

32 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 33 ♖h3 ♕xd4

Of course 33...♖xg6 34 ♕h8+ ♔f7 35 ♖h7+ also loses.

34 ♕h8+ ♔f7 35 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 36 ♕xc8

B



Both flags were hanging and we had stopped writing down the moves. The rest requires no comment.

36...♗d5 37 ♕d7+ ♔f6 38 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 39 ♗b3 ♘g5 40 ♖g3 ♔f6 41 ♗xd5 exd5 42 ♖c3 ♔e5 43 ♖c6 d4 44 ♖xb6 d3 45 ♔f1 ♘e4 46 h4 ♔d4 47 h5 1-0

As World Cadet Champion I of course received certain privileges from the Soviet Sports Committee. The most important of these was an invitation to the play in the Semi-Final of the Soviet Championship, to be held in Klaipeda in November 1988, where I had the opportunity to play against such established grandmasters as Gelfand, Dolmatov and Psakhis, etc.

In the first half of the tournament I won three games and was close to the lead, but then I collapsed to finish with 7 points out of 16. Still, it was excellent experience.

3 Professional Chess Life (1989-1996)

Since 1989 I have played in so many tournaments that it is impossible to describe all of them. Probably the games I played in these years will tell the reader more. Here I offer a brief account of my career during this period.

In March and April 1989 I received another privilege from Goskomsport – a chance to play in the Budapest open (in which I made my first international master norm), followed by a closed category 9 event in Torcy, France, where I shared first and second place with grandmaster Kupreichik and achieved my first GM norm.

The following month I received another chance to go for a GM norm in the GMA open in Moscow. However, I started badly and finished half a point short with 5½ out of 9. Compensation was received in the form of $1,000 prize-money (which was a lot of money in the USSR in those days) which gave me some security and enabled me to make plans for my career. I had just finished school and had decided that I would play chess full-time for a while. (In fact, after a year of chess I went to university because there was no other legal way to avoid military service. I completely quit my studies in the beginning of 1993 but even before that I never spent too much time studying.)

In the summer of 1989 I took part in the Soviet Youth Games (a kind of youth team championship), where I scored 6 out of 8 on first board to share first place with Boris Gelfand from Byelorussia and the Moldavian Victor Bologan (who is now a grandmaster). In this event I scored a remarkable victory over Vasily Ivanchuk (world no. 3 at that time) after he had declined a draw in an equal endgame.

The Soviet system started to change dramatically in 1989 and chessplayers were able to travel abroad a lot more using our own personal contacts and financial resources. Thanks to the Swedish IM Richard Wessman and Norwegian IM Rune Djurhuus (whom I had met at the World Junior Championship in Colombia, where, by the way, I played poorly) I received invitations to play in open tournaments in Stockholm at the end of the year and Gausdal in January 1990. When, after a two-week nightmare of arranging documentation, I finally arrived in Stockholm I already felt that I had done the hard part and the chess would be much easier. In fact I scored grandmaster norms in both tournaments and was awarded the title in May 1990.

The following month I was invited to what turned out to be the last Soviet Zonal tournament and surprised even myself by finishing in a tie for the first four places (with Leonid Yudasin, Smbat Lputian and Alexei Dreyev), which was sufficient for a berth in the Interzonal, a 13-round Swiss tournament held in Manila in June and July of 1990. Of course I had hopes of qualifying for the Candidates' stage but unfortunately I made a slow start and had only scored 3½ after the first 8 rounds. With a last ditch attempt I won three games in a row but could only manage two draws at the end, which was not enough. Still, 7½ out of 13 was a good result for me.

In August I then went to Santiago for another attempt on the World Junior Championship. Although I scored 10½/13 the American Ilya Gurevich (whom I had lost to in round 7) made the same score and was awarded the title on some strange tie-break system.

This tournament was also remarkable because it was there that I encountered the Argentinean Veronica Alvarez, who was participating in the World Girls (Under-20) Championship, for the first time. We were married in January 1994.

After the World Junior I more or less completely broke away from the Sports

Committee and was now dependent solely on tournament organizers. In order to obtain good invitations I needed to improve my rating as much as possible so I started trying to beat every weaker opponent I played in every competition. Sometimes I took many risks, sometimes I had insufficient energy, but in general my plan worked and in the summer of 1991 I was invited to my first category 15 tournament in Biel, where I took first place with 9½/14, a point clear of Evgeny Bareyev. Later that year I began playing for Hamburg in the German Bundesliga, for whom I made 9½/10 on second board in my first season, which ended in May 1992.

As a result my rating began to improve. I was 2655 in January 1992 and this went up to 2710 in July. I won several tournaments in this period, but my first category 17 event, in Dortmund in April, was almost a disaster – 3½ points out of 9.

In June the Latvian team (Shirov, Kengis, Shabalov, Lanka, Bagirov and Klovans) went to the Olympiad in Manila. We were naturally very excited about this as it was the first time a Latvian team had participated since the Buenos Aires event in 1939. Our final result, fifth place out of more than a hundred teams, was quite an achievement in my opinion (but one, alas, which we couldn't repeat in Moscow in 1994, where we finished 19th). I scored 9 out of 13 on top board, but I was disappointed to lose to Garry Kasparov after missing a simple two-move win.

Before the Olympiad in 1992 my progress had been quite smooth, but then things started to get a little shaky. Returning to Biel in July/August 1992 for a category 16, 8-player tournament I could only manage 5½/14 to finish last but one. In Moscow in November it was the same story and other results such as 50% at Wijk aan Zee in January 1993 were equally unimpressive.

My chance to re-establish myself among the world elite came with the 1993 category 18 tournament in Linares, Spain in February/March 1993. Here I started well, winning the first two games but then slipped back to 50% with losses in rounds 3 and 5. Having won from a dubious position against Gelfand in round 8, I regained some confidence and won two more games. My final result (8/13) was enough to compensate for my earlier disasters.

After Linares I played either good or average tournaments for the rest of the year. The highlights were first place at Munich in May (category 16) and reaching the semi-final of the Tilburg tournament, where I was narrowly defeated by Ivanchuk in a rapid chess tie-break. Although I didn't qualify for either the FIDE or PCA Candidates' cycles, my results in both Interzonals were acceptable.

Returning again to Linares in February/March 1994 I reached the peak of my career so far. It was the first time that I had been accompanied to a tournament by my wife and the start, ½ out of 3, was discouraging. However, in round 4 I beat the Spanish grandmaster Miguel Illescas and I was then joined by my friend, grandmaster Victor Bologan (who was my second at Tilburg 1993, and with whom I have had several training sessions) who had come to assist me. After victories against the Bulgarian Veselin Topalov, Vasily Ivanchuk and Judit Polgar, I made three draws with Kasparov, Karpov and Gelfand. The quality of all these games was quite good, but then Bologan left (he is a professional player too) and I again started playing badly. However, lady luck shone down on me and I won two further games (against Kamsky and Kramnik), to finish with 8½ out of 13, sharing second and third places with Kasparov (Karpov was first with 11).

After Linares my rating was the third highest in the world and I managed to improve it further with victories in three Bundesliga and three French League games in March and April. But in May another crisis began and I had several bitter results, sweetened only by sharing second and third places in Horgen, Switzerland in September behind Kasparov. My last event of 1994 was the Moscow Olympiad where my performance on top board (8/13) was nothing special.

In February 1995 I won the training (for my opponent) match against Jeroen Piket: 5½-2½. An excellent result but not in terms of the quality of the games. Then I, as usual, did well in Linares – this time scoring 8 out of 13 to share 3rd-4th places with Topalov behind Ivanchuk and Karpov. But in April I played so horribly in a category 18 tournament in Dos Hermanas (a suburb of Seville) that I finished last – for the first time in my life. I still don't really know what happened because I often stood well after the opening. Immediately after Dos Hermanas I went to Leon where I shared 1st-2nd places with Bareyev in a category 14 tournament (6½ out of 9).

After the Leon tournament I had two months' rest and this was especially good for me since apart from physical preparation I needed to think what to do about my chess. I think I did the right thing. I was able to start hard work on chess again and I believe that one day it will pay off. This also gave me more confidence and made me willing to play and fight. I started playing more creative chess again, working hard during every game as in my best times.

However it also had one drawback. It turned out that at the age of twenty-three I was not so full of energy as when I was a teenager. Although I had a solid performance at Biel in July 1995 (a single round-robin category 15 tournament), recovering well from a slow start, my next tournaments in Amsterdam and Belgrade (category 16 and 17 respectively) were anything but smooth. A sharp start (3½ out of 4 in both!), interesting games with plenty of creative ideas but a lack of energy at the end and finally respectable but not especially satisfactory scores. My next tournament, Wijk aan Zee in January 1996, was even worse – just fifty per cent. Actually 1996 is not going as well as I had hoped. I had just one really strong tournament in Madrid in May and I also again made the best performance in the Bundesliga, but didn't score so many points as four years ago.

Now that this book is finally finished (it really took too long!) my real comeback will start! I have nothing else to add and it is time to let the moves speak for themselves. I would only like to express the wish that one day I will have some games worthy of another edition.

Game 6
Shirov – Akopian
USSR Young Masters Championship, Tbilisi 1989

These annotations were made in February 1989 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga* under the title 'Without any prepared analysis'.

The 1989 USSR Young Masters Championship went badly for me. Right from the start I got stuck in a drawing rut, then in the middle I gained two wins and reached 'plus one', but I could not maintain this and finished with a fifty per cent score. Many of my drawn games were interesting, but my only notable win was the one over Akopian. In describing this encounter, I cannot avoid mentioning its thematic predecessor – the game Epishin-Khenkin (56th USSR Championship Semi-Final, Barnaul 1988). On certain key questions my opinions differed from those of Epishin, but here I will concentrate on my own.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3 c5 8 ♖b1 0-0 9 ♗e2

I used to employ the variation with 7 ♗c4 and 8 ♘e2, but games such as Yusupov-Kasparov and Belyavsky-Kasparov from the 55th USSR Championship (Moscow 1988) showed that Black has good play, and the number of its supporters fell rapidly. Instead I chose a variation that once experienced a boom, and has now been revived. It is constantly employed by Gelfand, Khalifman and Epishin, and of those who have recently begun playing it, I should mention Dokhoyan.

[AS – The line 8 ♖b1 0-0 9 ♗e2 is extremely popular nowadays. I notice that Kramnik, for example, has employed it very successfully recently. And I have also experienced the line with the black pieces against another faithful '8 ♖b1 club member', namely Joel Lautier, in Belgrade 1995.]

9...♕a5

Nowadays most players elect for 9...b6 or 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕a5+. In the latter case White has the very interesting continuation 11 ♗d2 ♕xa2 12 0-0 with enough compensation for the pawn, e.g. 12...b6 13 ♕c1 ♕e6 14 ♗c4 ♕xe4 15 ♖e1 ♕b7 16 ♗b4 ♗e6 17 ♖xe6 fxe6 18 ♘g5 with a very strong attack (Vaiser-Andrianov, Naberezhnye Chelny 1988), or 13...♗b7 14 ♗c4 ♕a4 15 ♗b5 ♕a2 16 ♖e1 ♖c8 17 ♕d1 e6 18 ♕e2 ♘c6 19 ♕e3 (Khalifman-Epishin, Vilnius 1988).

[AS – Of course, there are now a lot of new games to study in the line 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕a5+ 11 ♗d2, etc. (such as Kramnik-Anand, Riga 1995, and Kramnik-Timman, Novgorod 1995). The already mentioned game Lautier-Shirov might shed some light on my own feelings about it, but of course it's too early for me to reveal all my thoughts.]

10 0-0 ♕xa2 11 ♗g5 ♕e6

All this has occurred many times before, without White achieving any particular gains.

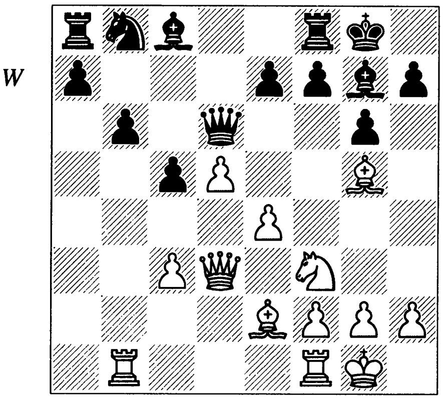
12 ♕d3

Epishin's idea, which he first employed in the aforementioned game with Khenkin. It is interesting that, according to Epishin, this move was devised during the game. At that time both Akopian and I knew of that game only by hearsay, as indicated by our great expenditure of time. Thus in neither case was there any prepared analysis, but for all that, this game is of no less interest to theory.

12...b6

Analysts may be interested in 12...♘d7.

13 d5 ♕d6



14 e5!

The point of my idea. White gains the two bishops, and a great advantage in space and development. Nevertheless, Black has two extra pawns ...

14...♗xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 16 ♕d2 ♕d6

16...♘d7 would have restricted White's possibilities to a greater extent. Then almost forced is 17 ♗f3 ♕d6 18 ♖fe1 f6 (18...♘e5? 19 ♖xe5! ♕xe5 20 ♖e1 ♕f5 21 d6 ♗d7 22 dxe7 ♖fe8 23 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 24 h3 is better for White, or 19...f6 20 ♖e6! ♗xe6 21 ♗f4 ♕d7 22 dxe6 ♕xd2 23 ♗xd2 is better for White) 19 ♖e6 fxg5 20 ♖xd6 exd6 21 ♖e1! a5!, when the position is unclear.

17 ♕e3

For the moment, all is as in the aforementioned game, whereas 17 ♗f3 ♘d7 would have led to the previous variation.

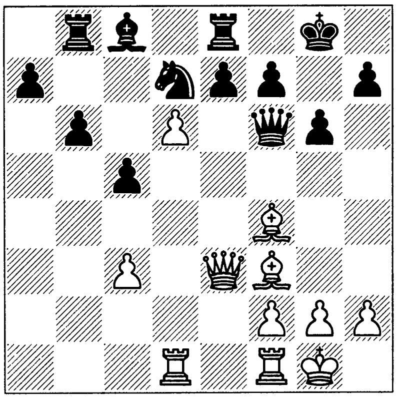
17...♖e8 18 ♗f3 ♘d7 19 ♗f4!?

But here is the divergence. Epishin played 19 ♖fe1 ♘f6 (19...f6 20 ♕e6+! is better for White) 20 c4 ♗f5 21 ♖a1, and after 21...a6?! 22 h3 h5? 23 ♗f4 ♕d7 24 ♗e5 ♔h7 25 ♕f4 ♖g8 26 ♕g5 he won quickly. But instead of 21...a6 there was 21...e5!, when White does not appear to have sufficient compensation for the two pawns. Instead of 21 ♖a1, in Epishin's opinion, it was stronger to play 21 ♖bd1 ♗g4 (otherwise 22 h3) 22 ♗xf6 ♗xf3 23

♗e5 ♗xd1 24 ♗xd6 exd6 25 ♕c3, but after 25...♗e2 I think that Black has good play. However, the move in the game should also not have achieved anything concrete.

19...♕f6 20 d6 ♖b8 21 ♖bd1

Bad was 21 dxe7 ♖xe7 22 ♕d2 ♘e5 23 ♗g5 ♘xf3+ 24 gxf3 ♖d7! 25 ♕xd7 ♕xg5+ and Black wins.



21...e5?

A serious mistake. Black would not have solved his problems by 21...♗b7 22 dxe7 ♖xe7 (22...♗xf3 23 ♖xd7 ♗g4 24 ♖xa7 ♖bc8 25 ♖e1 is better for White) 23 ♖xd7! ♖xe3 24 fxe3 ♗xf3 25 ♗xb8 ♕xc3 26 ♖xf3 ♕e1+ 27 ♖f1 ♕xe3+ 28 ♔h1 ♕e8 29 ♖fd1! when White has a won position, but 21...e6! was essential. During the game I did not consider this move seriously (seemingly neither did my opponent), but now it is not easy to find compensation for the material. White should probably play 22 ♗c6 ♕d8 23 ♖fe1 b5!?, when it is he who has to seek a way of equalizing.

22 ♗g5 ♕g7

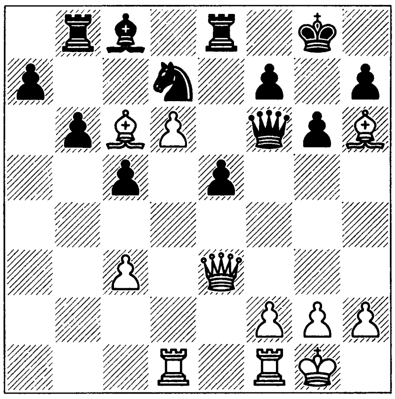
If 22...♕f5 23 ♗e4 ♕e6 24 ♗d5 ♕f5 25 f4!, while 22...♕h8 is well met by 23 ♗c6.

23 ♗h6 ♕f6 24 ♗c6! *(D)*

I first thought of chickening out (I was, after all, two pawns down!) by playing 24 ♗g5, but this desire soon passed. Akopian had about 15 minutes left on his clock, while I had about half an hour.

24...♖e6

Now I was in no doubt that I was going to win. The only chance was 24...♕d8 25 f4 ♗b7 26 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 27 fxe5 f5!, although after 28 ♗g5 ♗e4 29 ♗f6, with h4-h5 to follow, White has the advantage.



25 ♗g5 ♕g7 26 f4 h6

If 26...f6 then 27 f5! gxf5 28 ♗h6 ♕g6 29 ♗d5 ♘f8 30 ♖f3 f4 31 ♗xf4! exf4 32 ♕xf4 ♕f7 33 d7! wins for White.

27 ♗e7 exf4 28 ♕xf4 g5

A last few nervous moves during time-trouble.

29 ♕a4 ♘e5 30 ♗d5 ♗b7 31 ♕xa7 ♘d7 32 ♗xb7 1-0

Game 7
Shirov – Forintos
Budapest 1989

These annotations were made in March 1989 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga*.

I remarked earlier that it wasn't my intention to include only games of the highest quality, but also some particularly memorable games. Here is such a game which marked another little step in my biography. I also like the way I played it.

1 ♘f3 c5 2 g3 g6 3 c3?!

After suffering a defeat in round 4 at the hands of the Yugoslav player Gosić (in a popular variation of the Queen's Indian Defence), I decided in my next 'White' game to transfer the weight of the struggle to the middlegame. 3 c4 is more critical.

3...♗g7 4 d4 ♕a5!?

Forintos strives to emphasize the weakness of White's third move. Unusual play now arises, since 5 ♗g2 cxd4 6 ♘xd4 ♘c6 or 5 ♘bd2 cxd4 6 cxd4 ♘c6 is good for Black.

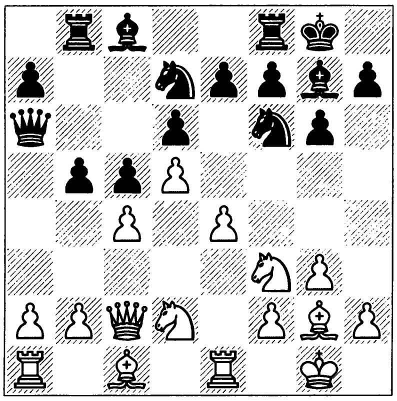
5 d5 d6 6 ♘bd2 ♘f6 7 e4 ♘bd7 8 ♗g2 ♕a6! 9 c4

White has played c2-c4 in two moves, but the black queen is not well placed, and this balances the chances.

9...b5 10 0-0 ♖b8

Black could have taken the pawn – 10...bxc4 11 ♕c2 ♘b6, but after 12 a4 ♗d7 13 a5 ♗b5 14 ♖e1 White would have had sufficient compensation.

11 ♕c2 0-0 12 ♖e1



12...♘g4?!

An inaccuracy. After 12...♘e8 Black has everything in order.

13 ♗f1!

By blocking the position, White gains the initiative.

13...b4 14 h3 ♘gf6

14...♘ge5 is well answered by 15 ♘h2 ♘b6 16 f4 ♘ed7 17 ♘b3, when White enjoys a slight advantage.

15 a3 ♘e8

The Hungarian grandmaster criticised this move, but offered no alternative.

16 ♘b3 ♕b6 17 axb4 ♕xb4 18 ♘a5 ♗b7

18...♘e5 would have lost to 19 ♖e3, but now I realized that, even though I had a certain advantage, it would be difficult to breach Black's defences.

There was little time (the control was two and a half hours for 50 moves), and so I decided to improve the placing of my pieces while maintaining the tension.

19 ♖e3 ♕b6 20 ♖ea3

If 20 ♖b3 ♕c7 21 ♘xb7 ♖xb7 22 ♖xb7 ♕xb7 23 ♕a4 ♘ef6 24 ♕xa7 ♕b3 with compensation.

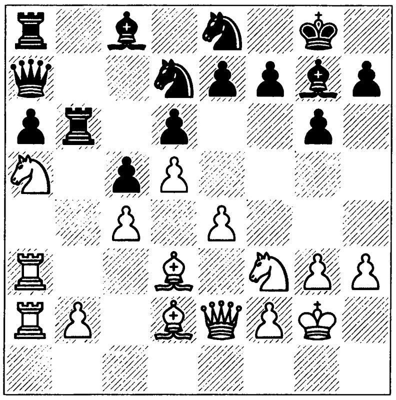
20...♘ef6 21 ♘b3

Nothing would have been achieved by 21 ♘c6 ♗xc6 22 ♖a6 ♕c7.

21...♖a8

Not 21...a6?! 22 ♘a5 with a clear advantage.

22 ♗d2 a6 23 ♖1a2 ♖fb8 24 ♗a5 ♕a7 25 ♗d3 ♘e8 26 ♕e2 ♗c8 27 ♔g2 ♖b7 28 ♗d2 ♖b6 29 ♘a5



White has make some headway, although after 29...♗b7 Black's position would still have been solid. I could have continued 30 ♗c1 with the idea of ♗c2-a4. With time-trouble imminent, this would have been the best decision for Black.

29...♘b8 30 e5!

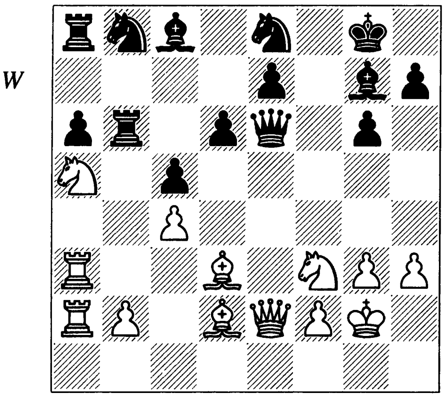
After this advance Black's position collapses.

30...♕d7 31 e6! fxe6 32 dxe6 ♕xe6?! *(D)*

More tenacious was 32...♕c7 33 ♗e4 ♖a7 34 ♗d5, when White has 'only' a big advantage.

33 ♗e4! ♕xh3+?

The third mistake in a row. However, after 33...♘c7 34 ♘g5 ♕d7 35 ♕f3 d5 (35...♖a7? 36 ♗xg6! hxg6 37 ♕f7+ ♔h8



38 ♕xg6 ♕f5 39 ♘f7+ ♔g8 40 ♘h6+) 36 cxd5 ♖f6 37 ♗f4 Black could not have held out for long.

34 ♔g1 ♖a7 35 ♘g5 ♗g4 36 ♗d5+ ♔h8 37 ♖f3!

Also good was 37 ♘f7+ ♔g8 38 ♘h6+, winning a piece.

37...♗xf3 38 ♕xf3 1-0

Black resigned in view of 38...♕h5 39 ♕f7 ♘f6 40 ♕g8+! ♘xg8 41 ♘f7 mate. This finish would have been a worthy adornment to my first win over a grandmaster!

[AS – Were it not for that fact, I would probably not have included this game here, although I do quite like it.]

Game 8
Boudre – Shirov
Torcy 1989

These annotations were made in April 1989 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga*.

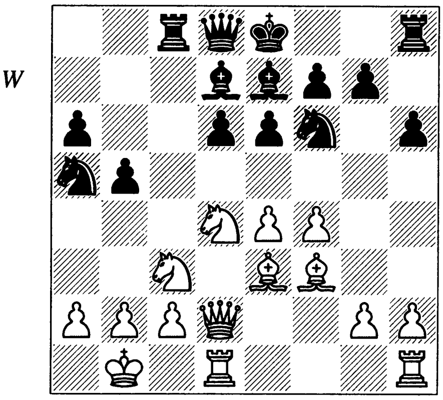
I have included this game in the book because the final combination seems rather unusual to me. Otherwise it is, of course, nothing special.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 ♕d2 a6 8 0-0-0 h6 9 ♗e3 ♗e7 10 f4 ♗d7 11 ♗e2 b5 12 ♗f3 ♖c8 13 ♔b1

In one of my games in Budapest the same year, I won after 13 g4 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 b4! 15 ♘e2 ♕a5 16 ♔b1 e5 17 ♗e3 ♘xg4 etc. Another possibility is 13 ♘b3 (Dvoirys-Yermolinsky, Simferopol 1988), to which the best reply is 13...♘a5.

[AS – Nowadays it is very well known that the plan of putting the bishop on f3 is not good at all.]

13...♘a5



14 ♕d3!

The French international master improves on Nigel Short's play in his game with Joel Benjamin (Hastings 1987/88), which continued 14 g4 ♘c4 15 ♕f2, and now 15...♕c7, with the idea 16...♘a3+!?, would have given Black the advantage.

14...♕c7 15 ♖he1?!

This is a poor move. 15 ♗c1 would have led to complicated play. During the game I did not like 15...♘c4 16 b3!, or 15...b4 16 ♘ce2 e5 17 ♘f5 ♗b5?! 18 ♘xd6+ ♗xd6 19 ♕xd6 ♕xc2+ 20 ♔a1. Black should evidently play 15...0-0 16 g4 ♕c4, when the chances are roughly equal.

15...b4! 16 e5

Bad was 16 ♘ce2 e5! 17 ♘f5 ♗b5 18 ♕d2 (18 ♘xd6+ ♗xd6 19 ♕xd6 ♕xc2+ 20 ♔a1 ♘c4 21 ♕xb4 ♘xe3 22 ♖c1 ♕xc1+! and Black wins) 18...♘c4 19 ♕xb4 ♘xe3 20 ♘xe3 d5, when Black enjoys a clear plus.

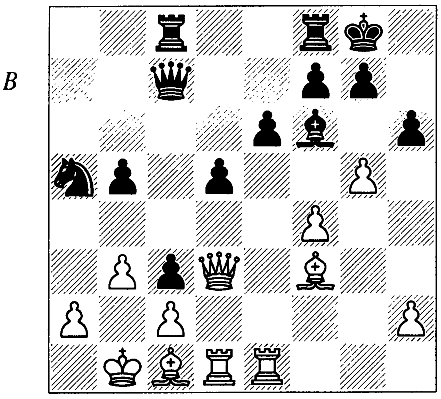
16...bxc3 17 exf6 ♗xf6 18 b3 d5 19 ♗c1!?

At first I thought that White had sufficient compensation for the pawn: he has excellent control of the centre, apparently his king cannot be approached, and in addition he himself is threatening g2-g4-g5 with a dangerous attack. After thinking for about half an hour, an idea suddenly occurred to me...

19...0-0 20 g4 ♗b5!! 21 ♘xb5?

It was essential to play 21 ♕e3 ♘c4! 22 bxc4 (22 ♕f2 ♘d2+ and Black is on top) 22...♗xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♗xc4 24 ♖xc4, even though after 24...♕xc4 25 ♗a3 ♖b8+ 26 ♔a1 ♖fc8 Black has a clear advantage.

21...axb5 22 g5



22...♘xb3!! 23 gxf6

If 23 axb3 ♕a5.

23...♘xc1 24 ♕e3

Or 24 ♔xc1 ♕a5, and White cannot vacate the d1 square without loss of material.

24...♕a5 25 ♕xc1 ♖a8

White resigned, in view of 26 a3 ♕xa3 27 ♕xa3 ♖xa3 and 28...♖fa8.

Game 9

Gheorghiu – Shirov

GMA World Cup Elimination Tournament, Moscow 1989

These annotations were made in June 1989 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga* under the title 'When one is not thinking about the result'.

By the time that this game was played, I was not in the best frame of mind – I had only one and a half points out of four, which in a nine-round 'Swiss' leaves virtually no chance of a top place. In addition, the quality of the games I had played was extremely poor. Therefore I took the decision simply to try for an interesting game, especially since my opponent was the highly experienced Rumanian grandmaster (the people of Riga well remember him for his successful performance there in the 1979 Interzonal).

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7

I do not consider the King's Indian Defence to be completely correct, but I still like this opening, and employ it when I am not overly concerned about points. The possibilities for creative play are, after all, much greater than in other openings.

[AS – I still play the King's Indian occasionally, but not too often ...]

4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 c5!?

The most critical continuation, along with 6...♘c6.

7 ♘ge2

Numerous games have shown that after 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 9 ♗xc5 ♘c6 Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn. For example, 10 ♗a3 b6 11 ♘ge2 e6 12 ♖d1 ♘d7 13 b3 ♗b7 14 g3 (White has problems over his development) 14...♘de5 15 ♗g2 ♘d3+ 16 ♔f1 a6!? 17 f4 b5 18 ♗c1 bxc4 19 bxc4 (Brenninkmeijer-Gelfand, Arnhem 1987/88), and here 19...♘a5 would have led to an equal game. There is no need to comment on 7 d5 – after 7...e6 a well known theoretical position is reached. In making the comparatively rare move 7 ♘ge2 the grandmaster offered a draw. I declined, not because I wanted to win, but for the reasons given above.

[AS – In fact I just wanted to try a new idea. For 7 dxc5, see the game Kramnik-Shirov, Bundesliga 1992/93, Game 40 in this book.]

7...♘c6 8 ♕d2 b6

Black must be wary. Thus 8...a6? is bad on account of 9 dxc5! dxc5 10 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 11 ♗xc5 (Alterman-Shirov, training game in 1988), when the weakness of the b6 square tells. For example, 11...♘d7 12

♗e3 ♘a5 13 ♘f4, and 13...♘e5? fails to 14 ♗b6.

[AS – Later on I decided that 8...e6 is more precise and played it against Carsten Høi (Daugavpils 1990). After 9 0-0-0 ♘d7!? (9...b6 is also possible) 10 ♗h6 ♗xd4!? 11 ♘xd4 cxd4 12 ♘b5 e5! 13 ♘xd6 ♘c5! 14 ♗xf8 ♕xf8 I achieved excellent compensation for the exchange.]

9 ♖d1

In the game Timoshchenko-Lanka, Riga 1988, White continued 9 d5 ♘e5 10 ♘g3 (10 ♘c1!?) 10...h5 11 ♗e2 h4 12 ♘f1, and after 12...a6 an extremely unclear situation arose.

9...e6!?

I very much wanted to avoid 9...e5. After 10 dxc5 dxc5 11 ♘d5 ♘d4 12 ♘ec3 an excessively dull position arises, where the most probable outcome is a draw.

[AS – 9...e6 is the idea I wanted to give life to. I found 8...b6 and 9...e6 almost one year before the actual game.]

10 g3

[AS – Probably 10 d5 is critical.]

10...♗a6!?

The immediate 10...♖e8 did not appeal to me on account of 11 dxc5 dxc5 12 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 (12...♘xd8? 13 ♘b5 ♖f8 14 e5 ♘d7 15 f4 and White is better) 13 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 14 ♗g2, and again the position is close to a draw.

11 b3 ♖e8 12 ♔f2?!

Gheorghiu obviously underestimated my reply, but 12 ♗g2 d5! was no better. Of the many variations here, I will give just one: 13 dxc5 dxc4 14 ♕xd8 ♖exd8 15 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 16 cxb6 axb6 17 ♗xb6 ♖b8, with a very strong initiative for Black.

[AS – The position after 12 ♗g2 d5! occurred in my original analysis back in 1988.]

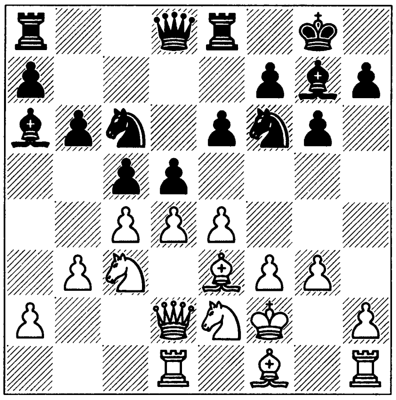
12 d5 exd5 is also bad for White:

a) 13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♕xd5 ♘b4 15 ♕d2 (15 ♕xd6 ♘c2+ 16 ♔f2 ♗d4! wins for Black) 15...d5! 16 a3 dxe4! 17 axb4 (17 ♕xd8 ♘c2+! 18 ♔d2 ♖axd8+ 19 ♔xc2 ♖xd1 20 ♔xd1 exf3 wins) 17...♕xd2+!, and Black regains his piece, remaining with a decisive advantage;

b) 13 cxd5 ♘e5 14 ♘g1 ♗xf1 15 ♔xf1 ♕d7, with a great advantage to Black.

Correct was 12 dxc5 dxc5 13 ♗g2, when the position is completely level.

12...d5!



The pawns have come into contact, and White's lack of development begins to tell. 12...d5 was an intuitive move; I hardly calculated any variations, and even now I am unable to give an accurate evaluation of the position. But my opponent was clearly not prepared for the irrational situation that arises.

[AS – Now I just think that Black has a clear edge. Kramnik (who was just thirteen years old then) said, having passed by – 'It's hard to believe that White will survive'.]

13 e5

During the game I was afraid of 13 cxd5 exd5 14 e5 ♗xe2 15 ♗xe2, but afterwards I discovered 15...cxd4 16 ♗xd4 ♘xd4! 17 ♕xd4 ♖xe5! with a decisive advantage. Probably best was 13 dxc5 dxe4 14 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 15 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4+ 17 fxe4 bxc5 18 ♘c1, when White can still defend.

[AS – Not really, if Black plays well.]

13...cxd4 14 ♗xd4 ♘d7 15 cxd5 ♘cxe5 16 ♘f4 ♗b7!

After 16...♗xf1 17 ♖hxf1 ♘xf3 18 ♔xf3 e5 19 ♗xe5 ♘xe5+ 20 ♔g2 White's position is comparatively well co-ordinated. Black does better to retain his bishop.

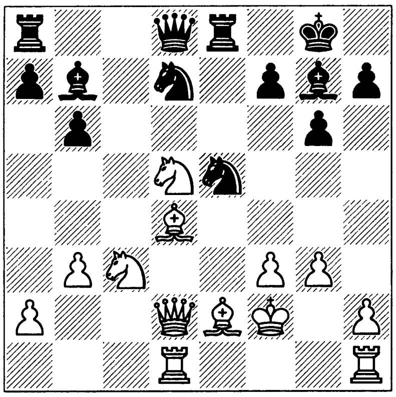
17 ♗e2

If 17 ♗b5 then 17...♘xf3! 18 ♔xf3 e5 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5! would now be strong – 20 ♗c6 fails to 20...♖c8!

17...exd5 18 ♘fxd5?

The decisive mistake. Now the diagonal for the bishop at b7 is opened and within a few moves the d-file passes into Black's possession, and White's position becomes indefensible. He should have played 18 ♖he1, although after 18...♘c5 19 ♔g2 (19 ♗b5? ♘ed3+!) 19...♕d6 Black has an obvious advantage.

B



18...♘f6! 19 ♘f4

If 19 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 20 ♕f4, Black wins by 20...♕xf4 21 gxf4 ♘g4+! 22 ♔g1 ♘e3.

19...♕e7 20 ♖he1 ♖ad8 21 ♕c1

It is already difficult to suggest anything better for White. All Black's pieces are participating in the attack, which means his queen, two rooks, two bishops and two knights!

21...g5!

For the clear-cut conclusion of the attack, they are joined by a pawn!

22 ♗b5 *(D)*

White loses after 22 ♘h3 g4! 23 ♗b5 gxf3! 24 ♗xe8 ♘fg4+ 25 ♔f1 ♘xh2+ 26 ♔g1 f2+! 27 ♔xh2 ♘g4 mate!

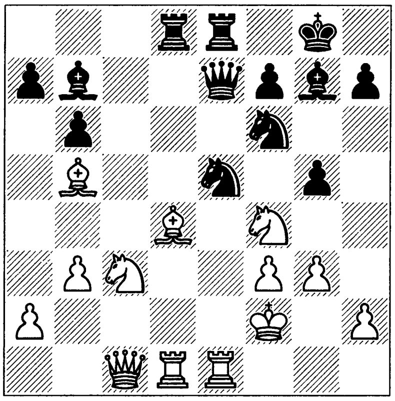
22...♖xd4! 23 ♖xd4 ♘fg4+! 24 ♔f1

Or 24 fxg4 ♘xg4+ 25 ♔f1 ♘xh2+ 26 ♔g1 ♕xe1+ and Black wins.

24...♘xh2+ 25 ♔g2 ♘hxf3 26 ♘fd5 ♘xd4 27 ♗xe8 ♕e6!?

27...♕xe8 was also sufficient to decide the game.

B



28 ♕e3 ♘c2 0-1

After this victory I decided to continue playing in a relaxed manner, and with 5½ points out of 9 I even finished among the prize-winners, sharing places 11-40.

Game 10

Shirov – Malaniuk

Moscow (GMA open) 1989

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

This was the last-round encounter and both players needed to win, as a draw wouldn't be worth peanuts.

1 d4 f5 2 ♘f3 g6 3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♗g2 d6 5 0-0 ♗g7 6 c4 0-0 7 ♘c3 ♕e8 8 b3

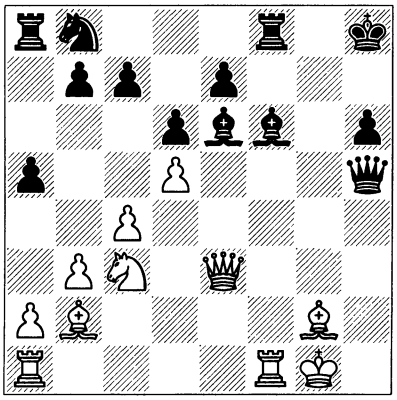
I had prepared this set-up before the tournament. It looked very natural and had also been played by Karpov against Malaniuk in the 1988 Soviet Championship (the most readily available information in those days).

8...h6

But this came as a surprise. Later I learned that two rounds earlier in the same tournament Malaniuk had already employed this move against Savon, who reacted in exactly the same bad way as I did!

9 ♘d5?!

By playing 9 ♗b2 g5 10 e3 I could have obtained the same position as in Shirov-Piskov, played two years later (Moscow 1991), which I duly won. The opening moves of that game were 6 b3 0-0 7 ♗b2 ♕e8 8 c4 h6 9 ♘c3 g5 10 e3 and the game continued 10...♔h8?! (10...a5!? deserves attention) 11 d5! a5 12 ♘d4 ♕g6 13 f4! ♘g4 (13...♘a6? 14 e4 fxe4 15 f5 is overwhelming for White) 14 ♕d2 ♕h5 15 h3 ♘f6 16 e4! fxe4 17 g4!? ♗xg4 18 fxg5! (18 hxg4?! ♘xg4 19 ♗xe4 ♗xd4+! 20 ♕xd4+ ♖f6 would have led to unnecessary complications) 18...♗xh3 19 ♘e6! (and not 19 gxf6 ♗xf6 threatening 20...♖g8) 19...e3!? (19...♗xe6 20 gxf6 ♗xf6 21 ♘xe4 is winning for White) 20 ♕xe3 ♗xe6 21 gxf6 ♗xf6?! (21...♖xf6 is clearly better for White but Black could still have put up some resistance)



22 ♘e4! ♗xb2 23 ♖xf8+ ♗g8 24 ♖af1 ♗g7 25 ♘g3! ♕g4 26 ♖1f4 ♕g5 27 ♖xg8+! ♔xg8 28 ♕e6+ and Black resigned.

9...♘xd5 10 cxd5 ♕f7 11 ♗d2

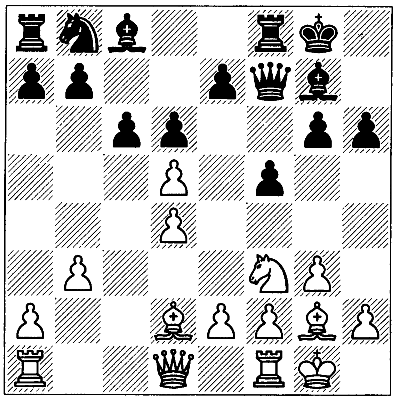
Savon played 11 ♘e1 and lost a complicated game in which he could certainly have improved at some point. But, as I have already said, I didn't know that game at the time.

11...c6! *(D)*

Here I realized that not only was I not better, but also that it was already difficult to achieve equality. After due consideration I decided to sacrifice a pawn but I think that I overestimated my compensation for it.

12 ♕c1!? g5 13 h4 g4 14 ♘e1 h5!?

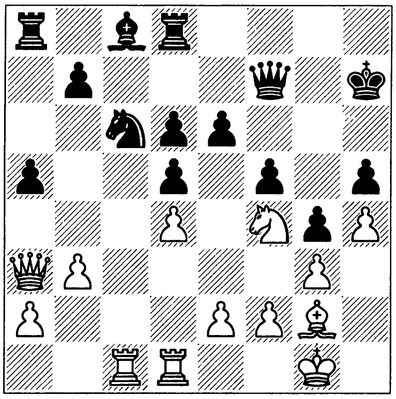
I was more afraid of 14...♔h7 since I didn't really like the position after 15 dxc6 ♘xc6 16 e3 ♗d7. After the text-move I could do the same thing but, as I have already said, the pawn sacrifice attracted me.



15 ♗h6!? cxd5 16 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 17 ♘d3

White has much better control over the black squares and were it not for the extra d6 pawn, Black could resign. But a pawn is a pawn ...

17...♔h7 18 ♘f4 e6 19 ♕a3 ♖d8 20 ♖ac1 ♘c6 21 ♖fd1 a5!



Although I had played as dynamically as possible, I couldn't see how to improve my position. Fortunately it isn't easy for Black either and with the tournament situation as it was, one side had to take a risk ...

22 ♖d3 ♖a6 23 e3 ♔h6 24 ♖dc3 ♖b6 25 ♗f1

Provoking 25...e5 26 ♘d3 with complications and 'arresting' the black rook in any case.

25...♕e7

I would seriously consider 25...e5 26 ♘d3 ♗e6 were I Black.

26 ♘d3

Keeping 27 ♘b2 in mind.

26...♖a6

Playing safe!

27 ♘f4

Draw?

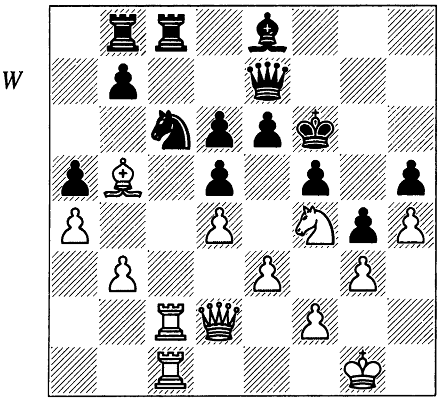
27...♖a7

Now White can develop greater activity, which just compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

28 ♕b2 ♗d7 29 ♕d2 ♔h7 30 ♗b5 ♗e8 31 a4

Another series of active moves is completed by White and now I even have the idea of playing b3-b4 one day. The main problem was that by this point I already had less than five minutes to reach move forty and I wisely decided just to keep the position steady and start doing something only on the second time-control. My opponent had a lot more time.

31...♖aa8 32 ♕b2 ♖ac8 33 ♕d2 ♖b8 34 ♖3c2 ♖dc8 35 ♖c3 ♔g7 36 ♖3c2 ♔f6?



A strange decision to 'activate' the king. Having between two and three minutes left I first wanted to play the 'standard' 37 ♖c3, but then I saw a combination which I immediately realized I would not have time to calculate properly. Then I just had a flash in my mind that I might not get another chance for prize money and quickly played:

37 e4!!

My opponent was visibly surprised but then reacted quickly and ... badly.

37...dxe4?

37...fxe4 38 ♘xh5+ ♔g6 39 ♘f4+ ♔h7 40 ♕d1! would have been the critical line, but I think that White has good winning chances there.

38 d5 ♘e5!?

This came as a shock but I kept my cool and quickly saw that the queen 'sac' would probably bring me the win.

39 ♖xc8! ♖xc8

39...♘f3+ 40 ♔g2 ♘xd2 41 ♖xb8 ♗xb5 42 axb5 e5 (42...♘xb3 43 ♖cc8 wins for White) 43 ♘e6 ♘xb3 44 ♖c7 loses as well.

40 ♖xc8 ♘f3+ 41 ♔g2 ♘xd2 42 ♖xe8 ♕c7 43 dxe6!

The last finesse. Now this pawn will be worth the queen.

43...♔e5 44 e7 ♕c3 45 ♗e2 ♘f3 46 ♖g8 1-0

The simplest. Now after 46...♘xh4+ 47 gxh4 ♔xf4 48 e8♕ ♕h3+ 49 ♔g1 Black will not have 49...g3. Therefore he resigned.

Game 11
Shirov – Ivanchuk
USSR Youth Games, Kramatorsk 1989

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 48*.

When this game was played Ivanchuk already held the third highest rating in the world (2660). At that time I was just an IM with a rating of 2495, and I must admit that I felt rather timid, thinking that a draw would be a very good result. Somehow I guessed that Vasily would play the Nimzo-Indian against me and I especially prepared the 4 f3 system (which I had not played before) for the tournament. How many good and bad days this opening has brought me in the course of my career!

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 f3 d5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 0-0?

At that time theory hadn't advanced to 6...c5 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♕d3 b6 yet. The text move is a blunder which, in my respect for my opponent, I missed.

7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♕d3?

Playing according to my preparation. I saw that 8 c4 ♘b6 9 c5 (9 e4?! c5! 10 d5? f5! is clearly better for Black) 9...♘6d7 10 e4 b6 11 cxb6 axb6 would not be especially promising but what I didn't realize in time was that 8 e4! would have just secured a solid advantage as:

a) 8...♘xc3 9 ♕b3 ♘xe4 (9...♕xd4 10 ♗b2 ♕e3+ 11 ♗e2 ♘d5 12 ♕xe3 ♘xe3 13 ♔f2 is clearly better for White) 10 fxe4 ♕xd4 fails to a move which I missed, i.e. 11 ♕b1! with clearly better prospects for White; while after

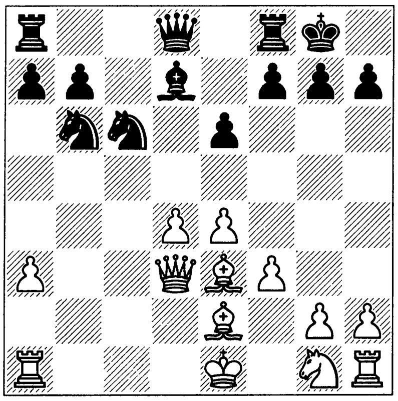
b) 8...♘e7 (played by Dautov, as he realized too late that the pawn cannot be taken, against Yurtayev in 1989) White does not need to put his queen on d3 at all and thus can develop properly, maintaining the advantage of two bishops and a strong centre.

8...c5 9 e4 ♘b6 10 ♗e3

Finally we reach the line which I had prepared.

10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♘c6 12 ♗e2 ♗d7!?

But here is another surprise. 12...f5 13 ♖d1 ♗d7 had been the accepted line before the present game.



13 ♘h3 ♘a5! 14 ♗d2

Confronted by a novelty, I tried to look for safe continuations. 14 0-0?! a6!, followed by ...♗b5, would have been very good for Black, but after the game Igor Rausis (who was coach of the Latvian junior team) found the much stronger 14 ♗g5!, which brought me a nice victory against Renet some eighteen months later (Correze 1991).

14...♘bc4 15 ♗b4 ♖e8 16 0-0 ♗b5! 17 ♕c3

White must be very careful not to get a worse position, e.g. 17 ♖fc1?! ♘d6 18 ♗xa5 (forced) ♕xa5 19 ♕e3 ♗xe2 20 ♕xe2 ♖ad8; 17 ♖ac1?! ♘d6 18 ♕e3 ♗xe2 19 ♕xe2 ♘b3 20 ♖cd1 a5; or 17 ♘f4 ♗a6!, intending ...♕f6 and ...♖ad8.

17...♖c8 18 ♖fc1

The only move to keep the balance. The others are too bad, e.g. 18 ♖ac1?! ♘b6 19 ♗xb5 (forced) 19...♖xc3 20 ♗xc3 ♘c6 21 ♖fd1 ♖e7 is clearly better for Black; or 18 ♖ad1?! ♘b6 19 ♕e3 ♗xe2 20 ♕xe2 ♘c6 21 ♗c3 (or 21 ♗c5 ♘a4) 21...♕d6 22 ♗b2 ♘a5 and again Black is clearly better.

18...♘d6!?

Black is forced to exchange some pieces and does so in the most logical way. Another possibility would have been 18...♗a6 19 ♗xa5 ♘xa5 20 ♕xc8 ♕xc8 21 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 22 ♗xa6 bxa6 23 ♘f4 ♔f8 also with equality.

19 ♗xa5

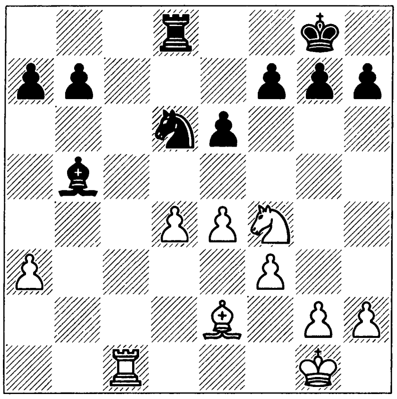
White can't avoid simplification either, since the position after 19 ♕e3? ♗xe2 20 ♕xe2 (20 ♖xc8 ♘xc8! 21 ♗xa5 ♕xa5 22 ♕xe2 ♕c3 23 ♕d1 ♘b6! is winning for Black) 20...♘c6 favours Black.

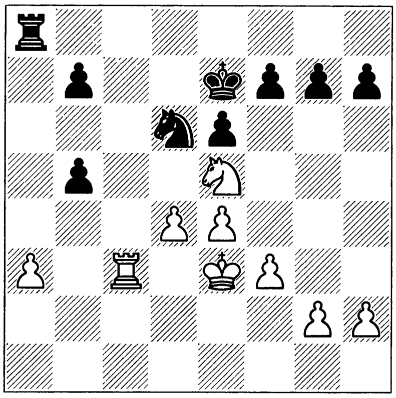
19...♖xc3 20 ♗xd8 ♖xc1+ 21 ♖xc1 ♖xd8

More complicated but probably still about equal would have been 21...♗xe2 22 ♗a5 ♘b5 23 d5.

22 ♘f4 *(D)*

Somewhere here I offered a draw but Ivanchuk refused. It is annoying feeling that you might be just considered a patzer (although Ivanchuk could have had purely chess reasons to decline) and this mobilized me to the maximum.





22...♔f8

22...g5 23 ♘d3 would have been fine for White, for example 23...♘e8 (23...♘c4? 24 a4) 24 ♖c5 ♗xd3 25 ♖xg5+ ♔f8 26 ♗xd3 ♖xd4 27 ♗e2 ♖a4 28 ♖b5 and Black doesn't win a pawn.

23 ♔f2 a6!?

Setting up a trap.

24 ♘d3

24 ♔e3? g5! would be falling into it, leaving Black clearly better. However, White was not obliged to move his knight from a good square on f4. Now I would prefer 24 h4!? ♗xe2 25 ♘xe2 ♘b5 26 ♖b1! and Black doesn't have more than a draw in the line 26...♖d7 27 ♖b3 ♘xd4 28 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 29 ♖xb7 ♖d3 30 ♖b8+ ♔e7 31 ♖b7+ ♔f8 (31...♔f6 32 e5+! ♔g6 33 h5 is slightly better for White) 32 ♖b8+.

24...♔e7 25 ♘e5 ♘e8!

25...♗xe2?! was not good due to the intermediate 26 ♖c7+! and after 26...♔e8 27 ♔xe2 White is already slightly better.

26 ♗xb5 axb5 27 ♔e3 ♖a8 28 ♖c3 ♘d6!? *(D)*

Black has managed to create some pressure due to White's weakness on a3, but the position is still equal as the b5 pawn is not so good either. Besides White's other pawns and pieces are in the right places.

29 ♔d3 h5

Still wanting to win. A draw would result after 29...f6 30 ♘g4 ♘c4 31 ♘e3!

30 h4 ♔e8!? 31 ♖b3

Now ...f7-f6 was already a dangerous threat, as can be seen in the variation 31 g4? f6 32 ♘g6 hxg4 33 fxg4 ♘c4 34 ♘f4 ♔e7 and Black is on top. So White has to remind Black about his b5-pawn.

31...♖a4

31...♖a5 is worthless because of 32 ♔c3.

32 g4

Hereabouts both players were running rather short of time and stopped writing down the moves. Somehow I managed to keep the situation under control while my opponent seemingly stopped counting the number of moves made. At some point I realized that this might be my chance to win the game and I eagerly continued blitzing after the 40th move.

32...hxg4 33 fxg4 f5?!

This gives White a dangerous passed pawn. There was still a simple way to draw with 33...♘c4 34 ♖xb5 ♘xe5+ 35 dxe5 ♖xa3+.

34 exf5 exf5 35 g5 ♔e7

Moving the king towards the centre is correct as the more concrete 35...f4?! 36 h5 ♘f5 would leave Black in trouble after 37 ♘f3 ♔e7 38 ♔e4 ♔e6 39 ♔xf4 ♘xd4 40 ♖e3+! ♔f7 41 ♘xd4 ♖xd4+ 42 ♔f5.

36 h5 ♔e6 37 h6 gxh6 38 gxh6 ♖a8

Black could also have made a draw had he been persistent with putting his king in the centre, e.g. 38...♔d5 39 ♘f3 and only then 39...♖a8. White has nothing better than 40 h7 ♖h8 41 ♘g5, and with the precise 41...♔c6! 42 ♖c3+ ♔b6 43 ♖c5 ♘e4 Black equalizes completely.

39 h7

After the post-mortem I thought I was already winning by this point. Should I mention that at that time Fritz didn't exist? Now, after seven years, I have had to reconsider my old judgements.

39...♔f6

Now it's absolutely clear to me that the exchange of knights is suicidal for Black, although here he could have done it in a better way than in the game. Still after 39...♘f7 40 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 41 ♖xb5 ♖xa3+ 42 ♔c4 ♖h3 43 ♖xb7+ ♔e6 44 ♖b6+ ♔f7 45 d5 f4 46 d6 f3 47 ♔d3 ♔e6 48 d7+! ♔xd7 49 ♖b8! White wins.

40 ♖c3 ♘f7??

The decisive error. If Ivanchuk had noticed that this was the last move of the time control he would probably have had time to realize that after 40...♘e4 41 ♖c7 ♖xa3+ 42 ♔c2 ♖h3 he could reach an easy draw.

41 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 42 ♖c7+ ♔g6

42...♔e6 would have been a better try, but probably not enough to save the game, for example 43 ♔e2 ♔d5 44 ♖g7 ♖h8 45 ♔d3 wins.

43 ♔e2

As I have already told the reader, I was continuing to blitz, so when I saw the conclusion of this line, I immediately went for it.

Another way to win would have been 43 d5 ♖xa3+ 44 ♔c2 ♖a8 45 d6 ♖d8! 46 ♖e7 ♔f6 47 ♖d7 ♖h8 48 ♖c7.

43...♖h8 44 ♖xb7

Actually 44 d5 was even simpler.

44...♖xh7 45 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 46 ♔f3 ♔g7 47 ♔f4 ♔g6

47...♔f6 48 d5 is still worse.

48 ♔e5 1-0

Ivanchuk resigned (as quickly as he had been making his last moves!) and immediately left the playing hall. I started filling in the score-sheet and was actually quite surprised to see the number of moves that had been made. After 48 ♔e5 ♔g5 49 d5 f4 50 d6 f3 51 d7 f2 52 d8♕+ White queens with a check.

I have included this game in the book because it seemed to be a kind of turning point of my ambitions in chess. Even though this win was not well deserved, it gave me the idea that I could become more in chess than just an average grandmaster.

Game 12

Shirov – Magomedov

Frunze (now Bishkek) 1989

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 48*.

Somewhere around 1986 I started serious analytical work on my own and since then I have often found new opening ideas. It's funny to remember that many of them came to my mind just while walking on Riga streets – even thinking about other things and enjoying myself I could nevertheless deeply concentrate into some position at those times. Naturally not all of such discoveries were of great value but somehow they often brought me a success. Here is one of those little tales which are memorable.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗e7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f4 c6 6 ♕c2 g6 7 f3!?

I discovered this new idea about a couple of months before this game and was proud of it. However, now I am not convinced of its value and the theory of this line hasn't developed much since. 7 e3 is the normal continuation here.

7...♗g5!?

My opponent, a talented Tadjikian (who is now an IM) answers with a move that I hadn't analysed. White's idea was to meet 7...♘f6 with 8 ♗h6 but I must admit that it was connected with a blunder, as after 8...♗f5 my intended 9 e4 would just lose to 9...dxe4 10 fxe4 ♘xe4! 11 ♘xe4 ♗b4+ 12 ♗d2 (or 12 ♔e2 ♕h4) 12...♕h4+ 13 g3 ♕xe4+. So the critical move is 9 ♕d2, but it seems that after 9...♘bd7 White doesn't achieve anything special, according to some of Geller's games. The other possible tries for Black are 7...f5!? 8 e4 ♘f6, 7...♗d6 and 7...♗e6.

8 ♗e5?!

Trying to avoid exchanging the bishops might have a point but objectively speaking White should have opted for a quieter game with 8 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 9 ♕d2!? (9 e4!?) 9...♕xd2+ 10 ♔xd2 or 8 ♕d2 ♗xf4 9 ♕xf4 ♕f6 10 ♕xf6 (10 ♕d2!?, intending e2-e4) 10...♘xf6 11 e4, with a slight advantage in each instance.

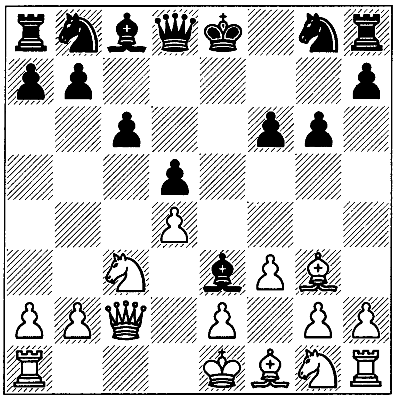
8...f6!

Despite a slight weakening of his position Black achieves quick development. Otherwise he would be playing into White's hands, for example 8...♗f6 9 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 e4 or 8...♘f6 9 h4! ♗e3 (9...♗h6 10 g4 is clearly better for White) 10 ♕d3 ♗xg1 11 ♖xg1, with a slight plus for White.

9 ♗g3 ♗e3!?

Very ambitious, trying to completely disrupt the co-ordination of White's pieces. 9...♘e7 would have been okay as well, for instance 10 e4!? 0-0 (10...dxe4 11 fxe4 ♕xd4 12 ♘f3 gives White good compensation for the pawn) 11 ♖d1 with unclear chances.

W



10 ♕d3 ♕e7 11 ♘d1 ♗h6 12 e4!?

Following an aggressive strategy at all costs. It was still possible to turn into a slow game by playing something like 12 e3 ♘a6 13 ♕c3 ♘c7 14 ♖c1, when matters are far from clear.

12...♘a6

Probably the best reply. For 12...dxe4?!, the reader should see the next game.

13 ♕c3?!

This careless move causes White a lot of trouble. It was also bad to play 13 a3?! in view of 13...♗f5! 14 ♘c3 dxe4 15 fxe4 0-0-0 (intending ...♘c5) 16 ♕e2 (16 b4 ♖e8 is clearly better for Black) 16...♖xd4! 17 exf5 ♗d2+ 18 ♔f2 ♕c5! 19 ♕e6+ ♔d8! 20 ♔e2 (forced) 20...♗xc3 21 bxc3 ♕xc3 22 ♘f3 (again forced) 22...♕xa1 23 ♘xd4 ♕xd4, when Black is clearly better, but 13 ♘c3 ♗f5!? 14 ♔f2 with a total mess was probably correct.

13...dxe4!

I had just overlooked that this natural move was so strong.

14 ♗xa6

There is nothing else. The next moves are also forced.

14...exf3+ 15 ♔f2 fxg2 16 ♔xg2 bxa6 17 ♘f3

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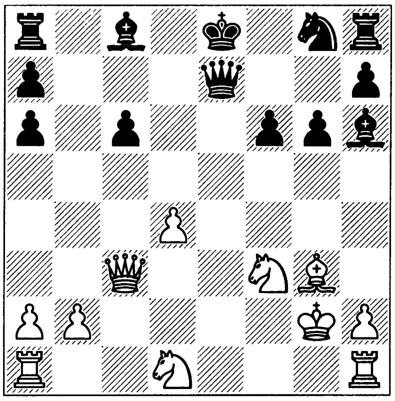


Since 17 ♕xc6+? would lose to 17...♔f7, White's last chance is to attack. This kind of game is certainly pleasant but objectively speaking ...

Fortunately my opponent immediately started to err, after which I started to have positive feelings about my position.

17...♔f7?

This loss of tempo will be decisive as Black will always be one move short of the perfect development! He should have played 17...♕d7! 18 ♖e1+ (18 ♘f2 ♘e7 followed by castling is just curtains for White) 18...♔f7! (but not here 18...♘e7, which yields White a strong initiative after 19 ♕c4! ♕d5 20 ♕xd5 cxd5 21 ♗d6 ♗f8 22 ♖c1 ♔d7 23 ♗f4! g5 24 ♗g3 ♘f5 25 ♖c7+ ♔d8 26 ♖f7 ♘xg3 27 hxg3) 19 ♘f2 ♘e7, when it seems that White can only try something desperate such as 20 ♘g4, which works after 20...♕xg4? 21 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 22 ♖e1+ ♗e6 (22...♔f7 23 ♕b3+ ♗e6 24 ♕b7+ ♗d7 25 ♕b3+ is slightly better for White) 23 ♕b4, reaching a draw by perpetual check, but is completely useless if Black simply plays 20...♗g7 with a clearly better position for Black. Probably the only serious chance is to sacrifice the exchange with 20 ♖xe7+!? ♕xe7 21 ♖e1, but still after 21...♕d8! (not 21...♗e6? 22 d5! or 21...♕d7 22 ♘e4!, intending ♘f6!) I don't see anything good for White, as 22 ♕xc6 ♖f8 23 ♗c7 ♕d7 24 ♕xa8 ♕xc7 leaves Black with the upper hand.

18 ♘f2!!

By saving a tempo on 18 ♖e1?, White prevents Black's optimum set-up. The position is already unclear.

18...♕d7?

It was time to change plans and try something like 18...♗e6. White can then maintain his initiative by continuing 19 ♖ae1 ♕d7 20 ♘e4 ♔g7! (20...♗h3+ 21 ♔f2 ♔g7 22 ♖e2 and 20...♗d5 21 ♘c5 ♕g4 22 ♖hf1 ♔g7 23 h3 are clearly better for White) 21 ♘c5 ♗h3+ 22 ♔f2 ♕d5 23 ♖e2!, but the position is still full of fight. Another interesting possibility would have been 18...♗f5!?

19 ♘e4!

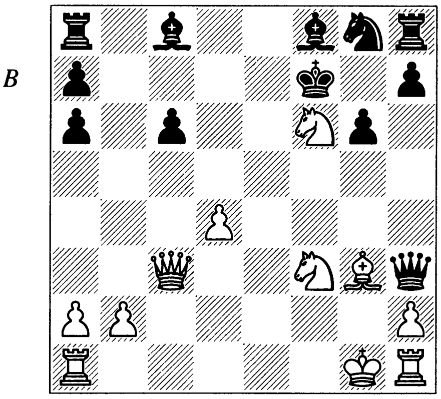
Now the position is clearly better for White.

19...♗f8?

Magomedov is apparently totally confused and doesn't offer any resistance. The same story would emerge after 19...♘e7? 20 ♘xf6!, but Black could have played 19...♕d5. Still his position after 20 ♘d6+ ♔f8 (forced) 21 ♕b4 c5 (again forced, as 21...♘e7 22 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 23 ♗d6 wins) 22 dxc5 ♗h3+ 23 ♔xh3 ♕xf3 24 ♖hf1 ♕h5+ 25 ♕h4! is extremely unattractive.

20 ♘xf6! ♕h3+ 21 ♔g1

Of course not 21 ♔f2?? ♘xf6 22 ♘g5+ ♔g7 23 ♘xh3 ♘e4+ and Black is laughing. After the text everything is clear and the rest requires little comment.



21...♗h6

If 21...♔xf6, 22 d5+ wins.

22 ♘e4 ♕h5 23 ♘e5+ ♔g7 24 d5 ♗f5 25 ♘xc6+ ♔f7 26 ♘d6+ ♔f8 27 ♕c5! ♔g7 28 ♗e5+ ♘f6 29 ♗xf6+ ♔g8 30 ♘xf5 gxf5 31 ♔f2!? 1-0

I had mixed feelings after this game since it was clear that, had Magomedov changed the move order on move 17, the result could easily have been different. The tournament was a qualifier for the semi-final of the Soviet Championship and in the end both players did the job, taking first and second place respectively. The next stage was to be played just two or three weeks later and during that short time I couldn't make a clear decision whether it was worth sticking with 7 f3!? Having deeply analysed the game I decided that until White's 13th move things were not so bad and ...

Game 13

Shirov – Magomedov

USSR Championship Semi-Final, Daugavpils 1989

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

The first round encounter! Would Magomedov adjust his preparation as well?

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗e7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗f4 c6 6 ♕c2 g6 7 f3!?

Of course!

7...♗g5

Accepting the challenge. Now the two players quickly followed the path which just they knew. Some of the other participants were wondering what was going on – they hadn't seen the bulletin of the Frunze tournament, and databases were practically unheard of in the Soviet Union at that time.

8 ♗e5!?

Bull's eye!

8...f6 9 ♗g3 ♗e3 10 ♕d3 ♕e7 11 ♘d1 ♗h6 12 e4

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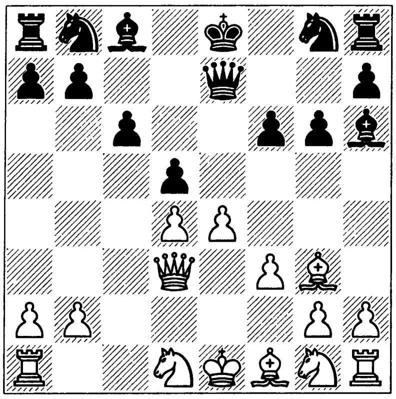

12...dxe4?!

After the game my opponent didn't give a clear explanation as to why he decided to diverge from the previous game. Probably in response to 12...♘a6, I would also have played 13 ♘c3 but in any case opening the centre seems a little premature to me.

13 fxe4 ♘a6 14 ♘c3 ♘b4

I would have considered 14...♗f5.

15 ♕e2

Now White seems better to me. The rest of the game was rather easy for me because I could more or less follow the ideas I had in mind when analysing our previous battle.

15...b6 16 a3 ♗a6 17 ♕d1

The queen has completed a circle. Amusing, isn't it?

17...♗xf1 18 ♔xf1 ♘a6 19 ♘f3

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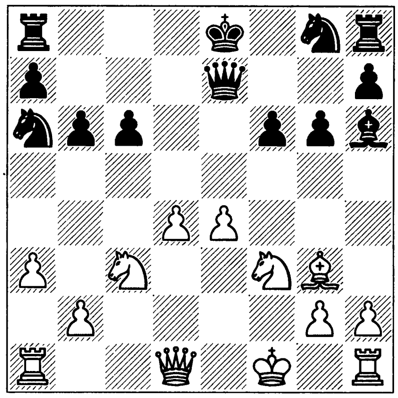


Both sides have almost symmetrical (from left to right) pawn structures and even in the position of some pieces. White's only problem is his king on f1, but that isn't enough to compensate for Black's weaknesses and poor development.

19...0-0-0 20 d5!

This time White's attack is for free; and also irresistible.

20...♘c5 21 ♕c2

Starting a second circle with the queen.

21...cxd5 22 exd5 ♔b7 23 b4 ♘a6 24 ♘d4! ♕d7 25 d6! ♖e8 26 ♕d3

See the previous note.

26...♖e3 27 ♕c4

Unfortunately the queen has to change its route, but it still moves just one point on the diagonal.

27...♘b8 28 ♕d5+ ♔c8 29 ♘cb5

The game is over.

29...♘e7 30 ♖c1+ ♘bc6 31 ♖xc6+ ♕xc6 32 d7+ ♔b7 33 ♘d6+ ♔c7 34 ♘e8+ ♔b7 35 ♘xc6 1-0

This was not a great game but its geometry still makes me laugh. Later on Magaram 'promised' to somebody that he would kill my 7 f3 next time, but we haven't met over the board since then. To those readers who know nothing about this player I should mention that later in the same tournament he had some qualifying chances for the final of the Soviet Championship and these days he plays mostly in Asian events. Magomedov played reasonable chess on top board at the 1994 Moscow Olympiad, so perhaps in future Olympiads the 7 f3 story will be continued.

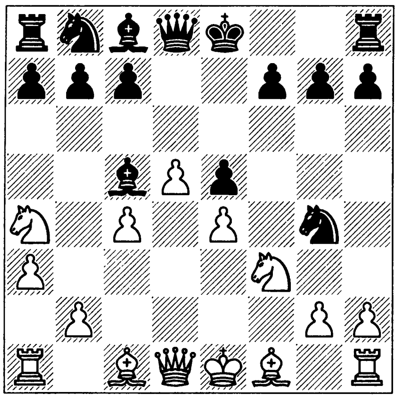
Game 14
Shirov – Dautov
USSR Championship Semi-Final, Daugavpils 1989

These annotations were made in December 1989 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga*.

Both this game and the next are in fact just miniatures. But it's funny to remember that one day I used to win games like this.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 f3 d5 5 a3 ♗e7 6 e4 dxe4 7 fxe4 e5 8 d5 ♗c5 9 ♘f3 ♘g4 10 ♘a4!?

Following the latest fashion. The year before Malaniuk had played 10 b4 against Ivanchuk (Moscow 1988), but now this seemingly illogical knight move was the centre of attention.

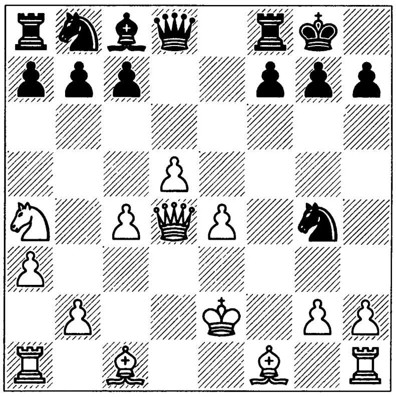


10...♗f2+ 11 ♔e2 ♗d4?!

'Theory' recommends 11...b5!? 12 h3 (12 cxb5 ♗b7 13 ♕b3 a6! is unclear) 12...bxa4 13 hxg4 ♗g3! 14 ♖h3 (14 ♕xa4+ ♗d7 and 15...♗xg4) 14...♗f4 15 ♗xf4 exf4 16 ♕d4 0-0 with an unclear position (V. Raičević-Ruban, Pula 1989).

[AS – In fact my intention on 11...b5 was to continue 12 cxb5 ♗d7 13 h3!? ♗xb5+ 14 ♔d2 ♗e3+ 15 ♔c3 ♗xf1 16 hxg4 ♗xc1 (all forced) 17 ♕xf1 ♗f4 18 ♕b5+ ♘d7 19 ♘c5 ♖b8 20 ♕xd7+ ♕xd7 21 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 21 ♖ad1! with a slightly better endgame. Now, more than six years after this game, I can reveal this, as I don't play 4 f3 anymore.]

12 ♘xd4 exd4 13 ♕xd4 0-0



All this had already occurred in the game Malaniuk-Dautov, Kecskemet 1989, which ended in a draw after 14 ♔d3?! ♘c6! 15 dxc6 ♘f2+ 16 ♔c3 ♘d1+.

14 h3!

This move is significantly stronger than 14 ♔d3.

14...♕h4?

A poor decision, which immediately leads to a hopeless position. After the game Dautov tried to demonstrate that 14...♘c6 15 ♕c3 ♘f6 16 dxc6 ♘xe4 17 ♕f3 ♖e8 would have been strong, but I think that after 18 ♗e3!, with the idea of 19 ♘c3, Black has insufficient compensation for the piece. White also has the advantage after 14...♘f6 15 ♗g5! ♘c6 16 ♕f2! ♘xe4 17 ♗xd8 ♘xf2 18 ♗xc7 ♘xh1 19 dxc6, when things are not too comfortable for the knight at h1.

15 g3! ♕h5

If 15...♕xg3 White simply wins a piece – 16 hxg4 ♗xg4+ 17 ♔d2 ♕f3 18 ♖g1 ♘c6 19 ♕e3 ♕d1+ 20 ♔c3 ♘e5 21 b3.

16 ♗g2 ♘e5+

Little better was 16...♘f6+ 17 g4 ♕g6 18 ♘c3, when White is a pawn up with an overwhelming position.

17 g4 ♗xg4+ 18 hxg4 ♕xg4+ 19 ♔f2 ♘bd7

The situation is not changed by 19...f5 20 ♕xe5 fxe4+ 21 ♔g1 and White wins.

20 ♕d1!

The most clear-cut.

20...♕g6 21 ♕h5 ♘g4+ 22 ♔e2 ♘de5 23 ♗f4 1-0

Black resigned, as after the exchange of queens White will be a clear piece up.

Game 15

Shirov – Yuneyev

USSR Championship Semi-Final, Daugavpils 1989

These annotations were made in November 1989 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga* under the title 'The caged queen'.

Is it advisable to keep queens on the board in a slightly worse position? Sometimes yes, unless the board appears to be too short of free space.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 0-0 ♕e8!?

This original move has been taken up by grandmaster Viktor Kupreichik, who employed it for the first time in 1988 in two games in Belgrade. However, in two games with Black against me, Kupreichik had not ventured the King's Indian Defence. On the other hand, I was now granted the opportunity of meeting the 'veteran' of this variation, the Leningrad master Yuneyev, who, it transpired, has been employing 7...♕e8 since 1977.

[Note by the Editor of *Shakhmaty Riga* - In the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings* there is a reference to a game Quinteros-Bednarski, Wijk aan Zee 1973.]

8 dxe5

After 8 d5 a5! 9 ♘e1 ♘a6 10 ♘d3 b6 Black has no problems (Ambartsumian-Yuneyev, Frunze 1989).

8...dxe5 9 ♗e3 ♘a6

In a game with Vučičević (Belgrade 1988), Kupreichik played 9...b6 10 ♘d5 ♘a6 11 ♗g5 ♘xe4! 12 ♗e7 c6 13 ♗xf8 ♕xf8, and obtained excellent play for the exchange. I think that the alternative 10 ♘d2 is stronger.

10 c5!?

An innovation. D. Gurevich-Mark Tseitlin, Moscow 1989, went 10 ♘d2 c6 11 a3 h5 12 f3 h4 with unclear chances.

10...b6

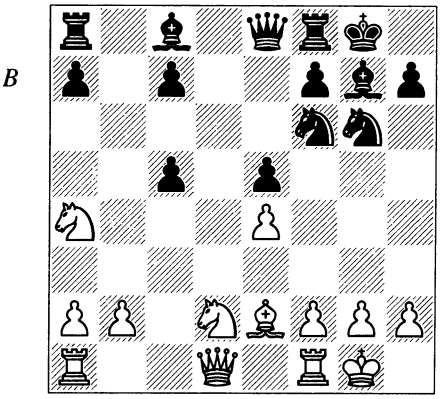
The position after 10...♘g4 11 ♗xa6 ♘xe3 12 fxe3 bxa6 13 ♘d5 is worth studying.

[AS – According to the game Ulybin-Ankerst, Munich 1992, White is better after 13...♕d8 14 ♕a4 ♖b8 15 ♖ad1 ♗d7 16 c6 ♗e6 17 b3!?, as Black has difficulties to find a good move.]

11 ♘d2 ♘xc5

After the game my opponent and I came to the conclusion that 11...♗b7 is stronger.

12 ♗xc5 bxc5 13 ♘a4



Black's extra pawn falls within a few moves, and his weakness at c7 remains. It is true that the bishop pair might give fair counterplay, but during the game my opponent was unable to demonstrate this.

13...♕e7 14 ♕c2 ♘d7 15 ♘b3 ♕g5

It was better to play 15...♕h4 16 ♘axc5 ♘f6, although here too White's position is the more promising.

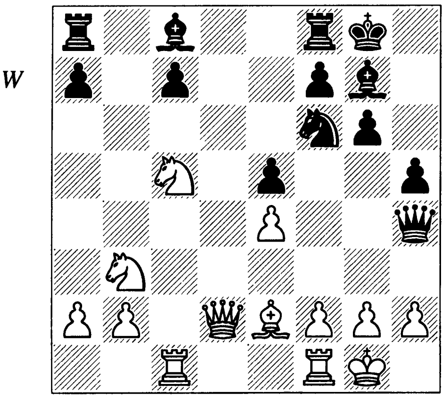
16 ♘axc5 ♘f6 17 ♖ad1 h5

White has the advantage after both 17...♘h5 18 ♗xh5 ♕xh5 19 ♘d7!, and 17...♗h3 18 ♗f3 ♘h5 19 ♔h1 ♗g4 20 ♗xg4 ♕xg4 21 f3 ♕h4 22 ♕f2!

18 ♕d2! ♕h4?

This move loses unexpectedly; neither does the exchange of queens give Black any joy, for example 18...♕xd2 19 ♖xd2 ♖b8 20 ♘a5 ♖b6 21 a3 or 18...♗h6 19 ♕xg5 ♗xg5 20 ♘a5 ♗g4 21 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 22 ♘c6, with better chances for White in both variations.

[Translator's note – Does White have such a clear advantage after 22...♘e3!? 23 fxe3 ♗xe3+ 24 ♔h1 ♗xc5 25 ♘xe5 ♗d6? *AS – It is true that after 22...♘e3! White has nothing. Correct is 22 ♘a6! with advantage to White.*]



19 g3! ♕h3 20 f3!

The black queen is trapped, and the threat of 21 ♖f2 and 22 ♗f1 cannot be parried by normal means. 20...h4 is met simply by 21 g4.

20...♗e6 21 ♘a5

The black bishop is unable to vacate the h3-c8 diagonal for the queen, except, of course, by 21...♗xa2 22 b3.

21...♔h7

Black could have given up his queen with 21...♖fb8 (21...♖fd8? 22 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 23 ♖xd8+ and 24 ♖f2 wins for White) 22 ♖f2 ♗f8 23 ♗f1 ♗xc5 24 ♗xh3 ♗xh3, but after 25 ♕c3 ♘d7 26 ♘c6 his position is hopeless.

22 ♖fe1 ♗h6 23 ♕c3 1-0

Black resigned, in view of 23...♗xa2 24 ♗f1 ♕c8 25 b3 ♖d8 26 ♘c6! ♖d6 27 ♘b4 winning.

Game 16
Shirov – Eingorn
Stockholm 1989

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 49*.

The Rilton cup in Stockholm was the first of two Scandinavian events where I came to make my final GM norms. I remember having a strict routine in both tournaments with total concentration towards achieving the goal – something which I now lack sometimes.

1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♗b4+ 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 f3 d5 5 a3 ♗e7 6 e4 c5 7 cxd5

A few months later I tried 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 b4 against Yudasin (Lvov 1990) but my position after 8...♗xg1 9 ♖xg1 ♕c7 was just worse.

7...exd5 8 dxc5

This idea came to me in the second half of 1989 and in this game I had an opportunity to test it. 8 e5 had been the main line before.

8...♗xc5

8...d4 is also possible but I think that Black's compensation for the pawn is insufficient if White continues 9 ♘a4 b6 10 cxb6 axb6 11 b4.

9 e5!? ♘fd7

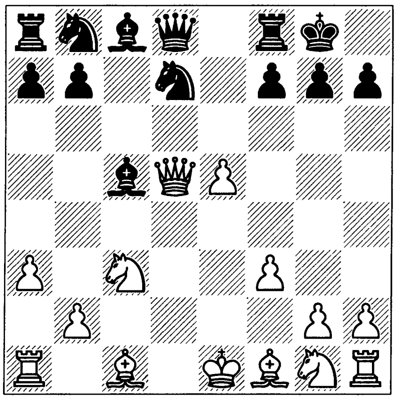
9...♘h5 10 ♕xd5 is clearly better for White.

10 ♕xd5 0-0!? *(D)*

Black had an interesting possibility: to sacrifice a bishop without committing himself to castling with 10...♘c6!? 11 f4 ♕b6 12 ♘f3 ♗f2+ 13 ♔e2 ♘c5!? 14 b4 ♗e6 15 bxc5 ♗xc5! But I am not sure whether this works, because of 16 ♕d3! (not 16 ♕e4 0-0-0! with attacking chances) 16...♖d8 17 ♕c2.

11 f4 ♕b6

Probably best. One month later the Latvian IM (now GM) Igor Rausis played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11...♗xg1!? 12 ♖xg1 ♕b6 13 ♖h1 ♘c6! against me (Daugavpils 1990), and after 14 ♗c4? ♘dxe5! 15 fxe5 ♗e6 16 ♕e4 (16 ♕b5 ♗xc4 17 ♕xb6 axb6 is terrible for White) 16...♗xc4 17 ♕xc4 ♘xe5 he had a strong attack, although the game was drawn in the end. Instead of 14 ♗c4?, however, I could have obtained a certain advantage with 14 ♕b5! ♕d4 (14...♘d4 15 ♕xb6 axb6 16 ♔f2! is clearly better for White) 15 ♕c4! ♘b6 (15...♘c5 16 ♘b5! ♕xc4 17 ♗xc4 is also better for White) 16 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♗d3.

12 ♘f3 ♗f2+ 13 ♔e2 ♘c5! 14 b4

14 ♔xf2? is bad due to 14...♖d8.

14...♖d8

Black must finally sacrifice a piece since after 14...♘e6 15 ♘e4 he would have had nothing for the pawn.

15 bxc5 ♗xc5 16 ♕e4!?

With this move White gives back the material and creates a totally irrational game. In any case passive defence such as 16 ♕a2?! ♘c6 17 ♖b1 ♕a5 18 ♗d2 ♗g4! 19 ♔e1 ♗xf3 20 gxf3 ♘d4 21 ♗e2 (21 ♗g2 ♕a6!) 21...♘xe2 22 ♔xe2 (22 ♘xe2? ♖xd2 23 ♕xd2 ♗f2+ 24 ♔d1 ♖d8 is clearly better for Black) 22...♕a6+, when Black's attack can be sustained, would not be my style.

16...♕b3!

Obviously the right continuation. Trying to keep the flames of the attack burning with 16...♘c6?! would be tempting but probably incorrect in view of 17 ♘a4! ♕a6+ 18 ♔e1 ♕a5+ 19 ♗d2 ♖xd2 (forced) 20 ♘xd2 ♗d4! 21 ♖b1! g6 (also forced, as 21...♕xa4 22 ♗b5 wins) 22 ♕c2! ♗f5 23 ♗d3 ♗xd3 24 ♕xd3 ♕xa4 25 ♖xb7 ♖d8 26 ♕b3! ♗f2+ 27 ♔xf2 ♕xf4+ (27...♖xd2+ 28 ♔g3! wins) 28 ♘f3 ♖d2+ 29 ♔f1 ♘d4 30 ♕b4 ♖d1+ 31 ♔f2 and it's Black who gets mated.

17 ♗d2

Forced.

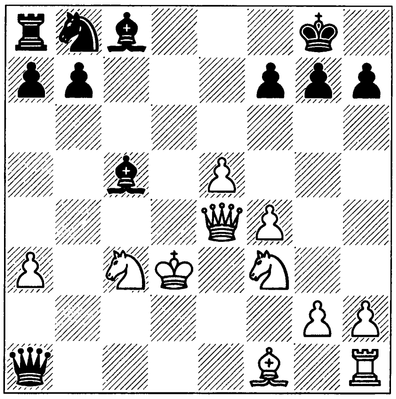
17...♖xd2+! 18 ♔xd2

18 ♘xd2? ♕xc3 is clearly better for Black.

18...♕b2+ 19 ♔d3

Not 19 ♕c2?! ♗e3+!

19...♕xa1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20 e6!!

Although this move doesn't win the game by itself, it's so astonishing that I have to give it two exclamation marks. Besides there were no other practical winning tries, for example 20 ♘g5 ♘c6! (not 20...g6? 21 ♕d5! ♗f5+ 22 ♔c4 b5+ 23 ♔xb5 and White wins) 21 ♕xh7+ (21 e6? is bad because of 21...g6! 22 ♕d5 [22 exf7+ ♔g7 is the same] 22...♕xa3! 23 exf7+ ♔f8 24 ♘xh7+ ♔g7 and it is Black who wins, hence e5-e6 has to be played on move 20!) 21...♔f8 22 ♕h8+ (22 ♗e2? ♕xa3 23 ♖a1 ♘b4+ 24 ♔c4 ♕xa1 25 ♕h8+ ♔e7 26 ♕xg7 ♗e6+ 27 ♘xe6 ♕a6+ and Black wins) 22...♔e7 and I don't think that White has anything more than 23 ♘d5+ ♔d7 24 ♕h3+ ♔e8 25 ♕h8+ leading to perpetual check.

20...fxe6

20...♗xe6!? would have been extremely complicated but probably not better for White at the end. He should now play 21 ♘g5! (21 ♕xb7 ♗f5+ 22 ♔d2 ♗e3+! 23 ♔xe3 ♕xc3+ 24 ♔f2 ♕c5+ 25 ♔g3 ♕c6 is equal) 21...♕xa3 (necessary) 22 ♕xh7+ (22 ♘xe6? ♗b4 is clearly better for Black) 22...♔f8 23 ♕h8+ ♔e7 24 ♘xe6 leaving Black with a choice between:

a) 24...♗b4!? The most natural but probably not the strongest move since if White now plays not 25 ♕d8+? ♔xe6 26 ♕d5+ ♔e7! 27 ♕xb7+ ♔d6! (27...♘d7? 28 ♕xb4+! wins) 28 ♕xa8 ♕xc3+ 29 ♔e2 (29 ♔e4 ♘c6 with a strong attack) 29...♘c6 and Black's attack is very strong, but 25 ♔e4!! ♘d7! (25...♕xc3? 26 ♕d8+ ♔xe6 27 f5 mate, while 25...f5+ 26 ♔xf5 wins) 26 ♕xa8, it seems that Black cannot create enough threats after either:

a1) 26...♘f6+ 27 ♔f5! fxe6+ (forced) 28 ♔g5 ♕xc3 29 ♕xb7+ ♘d7 30 ♔g4! (30 ♗b5? ♕f6+ 31 ♔g4 ♕g6+ 32 ♔f3 ♕h5+ is only slightly better for White) 30...♔d6 31 g3! (31 ♗b5?! ♘f6+ 32 ♔h4 g5+!! 33 ♔xg5 ♕c5+ 34 ♔xf6 ♗c3+ 35 ♔g6 ♕f5+ 36 ♔h6 ♕xf4+ and 31 ♕f3 ♘f6+ 32 ♔h3 ♕xf3+ 33 gxf3 ♘d5! are again only slightly better for White) 31...♕c5 32 ♗d3! when White is clearly on top; even with the tougher

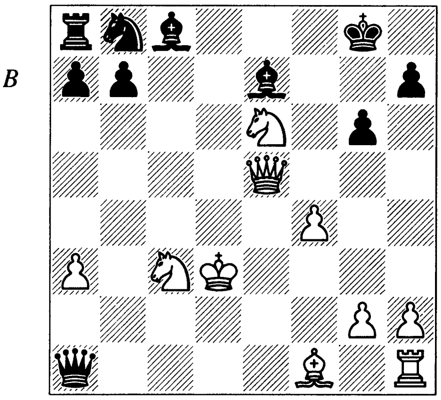
a2) 26...♕xc3!, as brute force should finally have the last word in the line 27 ♕xb7 ♔xe6 28 ♕d5+ ♔e7 29 ♕c4! ♘c5+ 30 ♔f5! (30 ♔d5? ♕d2+ 31 ♕d4 ♕a2+ 32 ♔c6 ♕e6+ 33 ♔b5 ♕b6+ 34 ♔c4 a5! with an attack) 30...♕f6+ 31 ♔g4 ♕g6+ 32 ♔f3 ♕c6+ 33 ♔e3 a5! 34 h4! However, Black does have a way to draw:

b) 24...♕a6+! 25 ♔c2 ♕xe6 26 ♗b5!! (strong but still insufficient) 26...♕g6+ 27 ♔b3 ♕e6+ 28 ♗c4 ♕b6+ 29 ♘b5 ♕a5 (29...a6 30 ♖e1+ ♗e3 [forced] 31 ♕h3! axb5 32 ♖xe3+ ♔d8 33 ♗xf7 wins) 30 ♕h4+ ♔f8 31 ♕h8+ ♔e7 and I don't see how White can improve his position.

21 ♘g5 g6 22 ♕e5!

Another interesting attempt would have been 22 f5!?, but it seems that Black can hold his own in the line 22...♗e7! 23 fxg6 ♗xg5 24 gxh7+ ♔g7 25 ♕e5+ ♔xh7 26 ♕xg5 ♘c6.

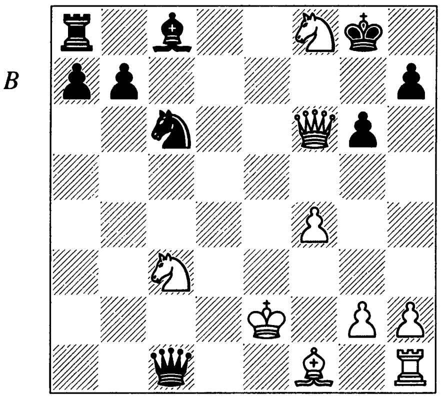
22...♗e7 23 ♘xe6



23...♔f7?

The only mistake of the game but one that loses immediately! There would have been nothing wrong with Black's position after 23...♗f8! 24 ♘xf8 ♘c6 25 ♕f6 ♕xa3!! (not 25...♗f5+? 26 ♔e3 ♖e8+ 27 ♔f3 and White wins) 26 ♔d2! (forced, as 26 ♘xg6? ♗f5+! 27 ♕xf5 ♖d8+ 28 ♔e4 ♕b4+ wins for Black) 26...♕b2+ 27 ♔e1 ♕c1+, and the ending after 28 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 29 ♘e2 (29 ♗e2 ♕d4+) 29...♕d8! 30 ♕xd8 ♘xd8 31 ♘xg6! hxg6 32 ♘d4 ♔g7 is approximately equal.

[AS – This statement was based on my old analysis and the stronger alternative 28 ♔e2! (D) was missed. In fact it yields White a huge advantage, since Black cannot regain the piece immediately.



His best chance is 28...♕b2+ (White wins after 28...♗g4+ 29 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 30 ♔g3) 29 ♔f3 ♕b4!, but even then White has practically a forced win with 30 ♘xg6! (30 ♘e6 ♗xe6 31 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 might give Black some counter-chances) 30...♘d4+ (30...hxg6 31 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 32 ♘b5! ♘d4+ 33 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 34 ♗e2 is clearly better for White) 31 ♔f2 hxg6 32 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 33 ♕f6+ ♔g8 34 ♘d5! ♕d2+ 35 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 36 gxf3 ♕xd5 37 ♔f2! ♕c5+ 38 ♔g3 ♗f5 39 ♕g5+ ♔h8 40 ♕h5+! ♔g7 41 ♗d3 ♖f8 42 ♖e1! ♖f6 43 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 44 ♕g4+ ♔h7 45 ♕h4+ ♔g6 46 ♖e6+ ♔f7 47 ♖h6 and the attack should soon finish the game. Thus I must conclude that the main (and not the only!) Black mistake was 20...fxe6, since 20...♗xe6 would probably have ensured the draw.]

24 ♕g7+!

Now it's all over.

24...♔e8

24...♔xe6 loses to 25 ♔c2! ♕xa3 26 ♗b5! (26 ♗c4+? ♔d7 27 ♖d1+ ♔c6 is not so clear) 26...♘c6 27 ♗c4+ ♔d7 (27...♔f5 28 ♕f7+ ♗f6 29 ♕d5+ ♗e5 [forced] 30 ♕d3+ ♔f6 31 ♘d5+ also wins for White) 28 ♖d1+ ♕d6 29 ♖xd6+ ♔xd6 30 ♘e4+ ♔c7 31 ♗b5.

25 ♘c7+ ♔d8 26 ♕h8+!

Preventing Black's development.

26...♔d7

Or 26...♔xc7 27 ♘d5+.

27 ♘xa8 ♕xa3 28 ♔c2 1-0

This game gave me one of the best feelings I have ever had from chess.

Game 17

Shirov – King

Gausdal 1990

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *New In Chess Yearbook 1990.*

The Gausdal tournament was one of few ones in my career when I had to play two games per day. The present game was an evening one and I felt rather tired after a complex encounter against Thomas Ernst. I am not especially proud of this game but the final combination isn't one to forget.

1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♗b4+ 3 ♘c3

At that time I was so happy with the 4 f3 line in the Nimzo-Indian that I even provoked my opponents into it from other openings.

3...c5 4 d5 ♘f6 5 f3

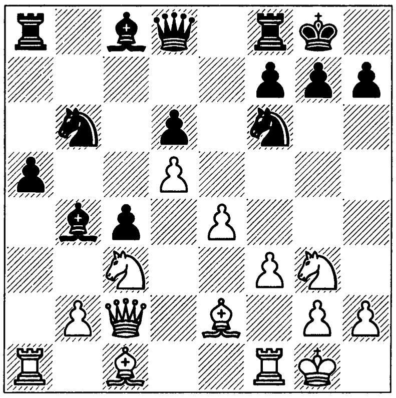
So I had achieved what I wanted. Nowadays everybody knows that 4...c5 is not so strong as 4...d5 in the 4 f3 variation.

5...exd5

This gives White a clear positional advantage. The critical lines are 5...0-0 6 e4 d6 7 ♘ge2 b5 8 ♘f4!? e5 9 ♘fe2 bxc4 10 ♘g3, Shirov-Savon, USSR Championship 1991 and 5...b5 6 e4 bxc4 7 ♗xc4 exd5 8 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 9 ♕xd5 ♘c6, with unclear prospects in both cases.

6 cxd5 d6 7 e4 0-0 8 ♘ge2 a6 9 ♘g3 b5 10 a4 bxa4 11 ♕xa4 ♘bd7 12 ♗e2 ♘b6 13 ♕c2 a5 14 0-0 c4

W



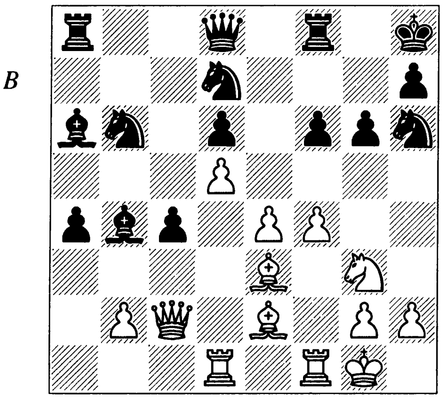
15 ♘d1

Probably both 15 ♗e3 and 15 ♗g5 h6 16 ♗e3 would have been better than the text-move, but it is always tempting to try to create a direct attack against the enemy king.

15...♘fd7 16 ♘e3 ♗a6 17 ♘ef5 g6 18 ♘h6+ ♔h8

Perhaps 18...♔g7 was better, as later in the game Black puts his king on g7 anyway.

19 ♗e3 a4 20 f4 f6 21 ♖ad1



21...♕c7

White's idea was to meet 21...♗c5 with 22 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 23 e5.

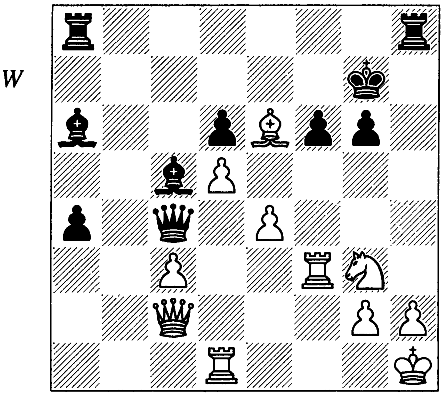
22 ♔h1

Now 22...♗c5 can be met by 23 ♗c1.

22...♔g7 23 f5 ♘e5 24 fxg6 hxg6 25 ♘g4 ♘xg4 26 ♗xg4 c3 27 ♖f3

Just bringing the pieces into the danger area and hoping that there will be a mate somewhere.

27...♘c4 28 ♗e6 ♘xe3 29 ♖xe3 ♖h8 30 ♖f3 ♕c4?! 31 bxc3 ♗c5



Here I found one of the nicest combinations in my career. I was pleased that I saw everything through to the end.

32 e5! dxe5

If 32...fxe5, 33 ♖f7+ ♔h6 34 ♕c1+ g5 35 ♖f6+ wins.

33 ♘f5+! gxf5

33...♔f8 34 ♘d6! ♕h4 (or 34...♗xd6 35 ♕xg6) 35 ♖h3 also wins for White.

34 ♖g3+ ♔f8 35 ♕xf5 ♕f4

35...♕h4 would have put up more resistance but after 36 ♖h3 ♔g7 (if 36...♕xh3 37 gxh3 ♔e7, 38 ♕g6 wins) 37 ♖xh4 ♖xh4 38 ♕f3 ♖ah8 39 h3 Black has no chances to save the game.

36 ♕g6 ♖a7 37 ♖h3!

The point.

37...♖xh3 38 ♕g8+ ♔e7 39 d6+ 1-0

Black gets mated after 39 d6+ ♗xd6 40 ♕f7+ ♔d8 41 ♖xd6+. Interestingly enough several good players to whom I showed the position after 31...♗c5 took some time before finding the winning combination. But when I tested the old Latvian maestro Alexander Koblents, he gave all White's moves instantly! Perhaps chess in Latvia was full of tactics from its origin ...

Game 18

Shirov – Bareyev

Lvov (Zonal) 1990

These annotations were made in February 1990 and first appeared in *Chess in the USSR*.

[AS – This game was the played in the last round. The winner would qualify for the Interzonal, while a draw would mean a play-off between the two players.]

1 ♘f3 f5

Bareyev advanced his f-pawn very confidently and I was pleased with this, since now a complicated game arises without any special efforts from me.

2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 g6 4 0-0 ♗g7 5 d4 0-0 6 b3

I made this move 'armed' with Dreyev's recent games. In Shirov-Malaniuk, Moscow 1989, 6 c4 d6 7 ♘c3 ♕e8 8 b3 was tried, but after 8...h6! 9 ♘d5 ♘xd5 10 cxd5 ♕f7 Black achieved an excellent game.

[AS – The reader has seen that game already (Game 10).]

6...d6 7 ♗b2 c6

The alternative is 7...♕e8. Tukmakov-Malaniuk, Lvov 1990, continued 8 c4 ♘a6 (clearly inferior is 8...e5 9 dxe5 ♘g4 10

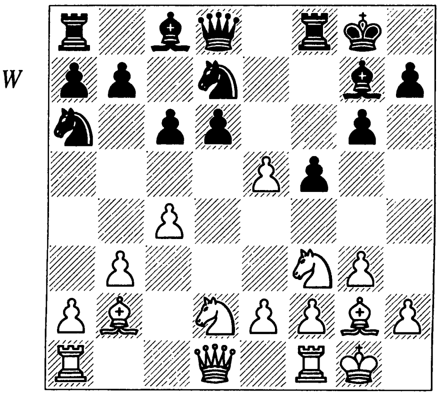
♘c3 dxe5 11 h3 ♘h6 12 e4 ♘c6 13 ♘d5 ♕d8 14 ♖e1, Bewersdorff-Tisdall, Gausdal 1990) 9 d5 c5 10 ♘c3 h6 11 ♘e1 g5 12 ♘d3 ♕g6 13 ♕d2 ♗d7 14 f4?! ♘g4! with a promising position for Black. But I think that White's play can be improved.

[AS – The following year I won a game against Piskov (Moscow 1991) after 7...♕e8 8 ♘c3, etc. See the aforementioned game Shirov-Malaniuk.]

8 ♘bd2 ♘a6 9 c4 e5?!

In the light of what follows, not the best continuation. 9...♕e8 comes into consideration.

10 dxe5 ♘d7



11 ♗a3!!

I have attached two exclamation marks to this move for the following reasons:

a) there is nothing better, since if 11 e4 simply 11...f4, the tempting 11 b4 does not work on account of 11...♘xb4 12 ♕b3 a5!, and otherwise White 'simply' has nothing;

b) for the exchange White will have sufficient positional compensation and excellent attacking chances;

c) in a decisive game it is especially unpleasant to have to defend, and seizing the initiative has double psychological strength.

11...♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♘f3 ♗xa1 14 ♕xa1 ♘c5

The knight is aiming for e4, from where it will defend the d6 pawn and control f6. But its position in the centre will always be insecure.

15 ♖d1 ♕f6

On 15...♘e4 White has the unpleasant 16 ♘d2 ♘f6 17 c5!, while if 15...♕e7 then 16 ♕d4 is strong.

16 ♕c1 ♕e7 17 ♗b2 ♘e4 18 ♕e3!

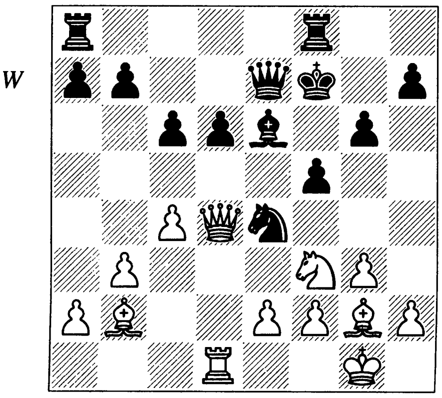
Now 19 ♘d2 is threatened.

18...♗e6

18...♖e8 fails to 19 ♕d4.

19 ♕d4 ♔f7

The only move, although at f7 the king is not especially comfortable. Totally bad was 19...♘f6 20 ♕xd6, or 19...♖f6 20 ♘d2 c5 21 ♕e3 ♘xd2 22 ♕xd2.



20 h4!

20 ♘d2 would also have led to the exchange of knights, since 20...♘xd2 21 ♖xd2 with the threat of 22 f4! is bad for Black. But 20...d5! 21 cxd5 ♗xd5 is much stronger, when Black wrests control of the d-file, and White has nothing better than 22 ♕g7+ ♔e8 23 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 24 ♘xe4 fxe4 with a drawn ending. With 20 h4 White ensures the exchange of knights at g5, and Black is unable to win the pawn advantageously.

20...♖ad8

Against 20...c5 I was intending the simple 21 ♕e3 and 22 ♘g5. I had spent most of my time calculating the line 20...♔e8 21 ♘g5 ♘xg5 22 hxg5 ♕xg5. Now nothing is achieved by 23 ♕xd6 ♕e7 24 ♕e5 ♗g8! 25 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 26 ♗a3+ ♔f6 27 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 28 ♖d7 ♖f7 29 ♖d8 ♖g7, but with the accurate 23 ♗a3! White retains the advantage.

21 ♘g5+ ♘xg5 22 hxg5 ♖d7

22...♕xg5 23 ♕g7+ ♔e8 24 ♕xb7 ♕e7 25 ♕xc6+ ♔f7 26 ♕f3 clearly favours White.

23 f4 ♕d8 24 ♔f1?!

After 24 ♕xa7 c5 White cannot avoid the exchange of queens, but in the variation 25 ♗f6 ♕a8 26 ♕b6! ♕a6 27 ♕xa6 bxa6 28 ♗c6 he wins quickly.

[AS – Therefore 24 ♕xa7 would simply win a pawn compared to the game. The text is clearly weaker.]

24...c5

On 24...d5 White would have replied 25 c5 and then 26 ♖d3, when Black's position is extremely difficult – although this would have been a slightly better choice for him.

25 ♕c3 ♖e7?

A blunder, although it is practically impossible to oppose the two rampant bishops, for example 25...♔e8 26 ♖d3.

26 ♗xb7! ♕b6 27 ♗f3

Here I no longer had any doubts that I was going to win.

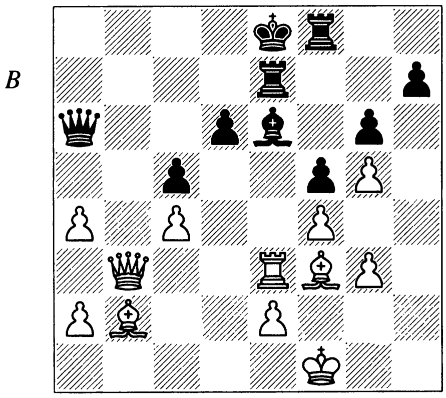
27...a5 28 ♖d3

28 a4 is also good.

28...a4 29 bxa4 ♕a6 30 ♖e3! ♔e8

30...♕xc4 fails to 31 ♕f6+ ♔e8 32 ♗c6+.

31 ♕b3!



31...♔f7

31...♕xc4 loses immediately to 32 ♗c6+ ♔f7 33 ♖xe6! ♕xe6 34 ♗d5, while the game continuation is equivalent to the variation 31...♗xc4 32 ♕b8+ ♔f7 33 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 34 ♕c7+ ♔e6 35 ♕xh7 ♕xa4 36 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 37 ♕h7+ ♖f7 38 g6! ♖xh7 39 gxh7, and White wins.

32 ♗f6 ♖ee8 33 ♖xe6!

The decisive second exchange sacrifice.

33...♖xe6

If 33...♔xe6 I was intending 34 ♗b7! ♕a7 35 ♗d5+ *[AS – Simpler is 35 ♕b5 winning immediately, but I missed it both during the game and in my original annotations]* 35...♔d7 36 ♕b5+ ♔c8 37 a5!, and Black is completely helpless.

34 ♗d5 ♖fe8 35 a5!

Complete zugzwang.

35...♔f8

If 35...h6 36 ♕b6! ♕xb6 37 axb6 with an easy win.

36 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 37 ♕b8+ ♔f7 38 ♕c7+ 1-0

Game 19
Shirov – Hauchard
Paris 1990

These annotations were made in May 1990 and first appeared in *Chess in the USSR*.

This game is clearly not impressive in its quality but the sacrifices and pawn promotion seem so amusing to me that I couldn't help including it in the book.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 b6!

On this occasion too my 'trade-mark' move brings success.

[AS – I won many games with this system over several years but then stopped playing it since I was sometimes not very happy with the positions I was getting from the opening. When I started playing other variations against the Benko Gambit I also got good practical results.]

5...d6 6 ♘c3 ♘bd7 7 a4! ♕xb6?

A positional blunder. 7...a5 is the only move.

8 a5 ♕c7 9 e4 g6 10 f4! ♗g7?!

Now Black ends up in a strategically lost position. But equally after 10...c4 11 ♕a4! ♗g7 12 ♘f3 0-0 13 ♕xc4 he has no compensation for the pawn.

11 ♗c4 0-0 12 ♘f3 ♖e8 13 0-0 e5!? 14 dxe6 fxe6 15 ♘g5

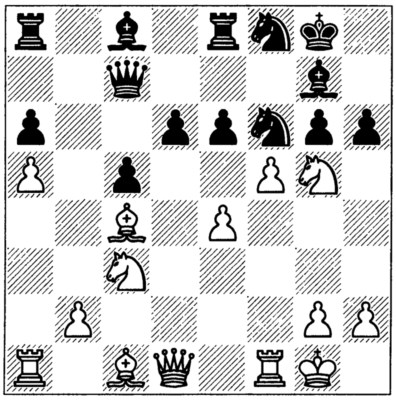
In the end this move leads to victory and to the prize 'for brilliancy'. But I also had available another continuation – 15 f5!? Black is obliged to play 15...gxf5 16 exf5 d5, to which White replies 17 ♘xd5! exd5 18 ♗xd5+ ♔h8! (the only move; bad is 18...♘xd5 19 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 20 ♕xa8, or 19...♔f8 20 ♘g5! ♘f6 21 ♕xa8) 19 ♗xa8 c4!, when Black has some counterplay, although it is hard to believe that White's material advantage will not tell.

[AS – In fact it will tell very easily; I just wanted to justify my silly search for sacrifices.]

15...♘f8 16 f5 h6

The only move. If 16...gxf5 then 17 ♗f4! is quickly decisive.

W



17 e5!

Already at this point I sensed that I was battling not only for a win, but also for the brilliancy prize. At the same time, 17 e5 is the best continuation of the attack. 17 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 18 fxe6 ♗xe6 is less clear.

17...dxe5 18 fxg6! hxg5

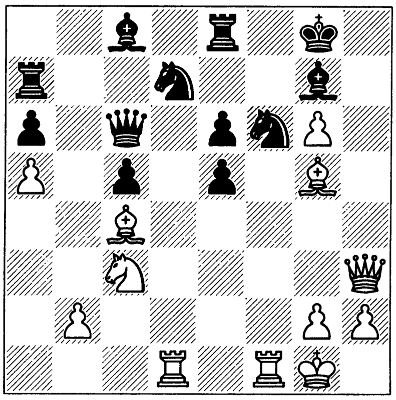
I was expecting 18...♘xg6, against which I had prepared 19 ♖xf6! ♗xf6 20 ♕h5 ♕g7 21 ♘ge4 ♗g5 (there is nothing else) 22 ♘xg5! hxg5 23 ♗d3!, and White wins. However, this is not especially pretty.

19 ♗xg5 ♘8d7 20 ♕f3! ♖a7

The rook may come in useful on the seventh rank.

21 ♖ad1 ♕b7 22 ♕h3 ♕c6

W



The critical position. Here I worked out the lengthy variation 23 ♖xd7! ♕xd7 24 ♖xf6! ♗xf6 25 ♗xf6 ♕d4+ 26 ♔h1 ♖g7 27 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 28 ♕h7+ ♔f6 29 ♕f7+ ♔g5 30 ♕xe8 ♕xc4, but I overlooked the simple move 31 ♕f7! The continuation chosen is rather more complicated, but also prettier.

23 ♘d5! exd5 24 ♖xd5!

Of course not 24 ♗xd5+? ♕xd5 25 ♖xd5 ♘f8!, when there is nothing clear.

24...♔f8!

My entire calculation was based on 24...♘b6!? 25 ♖d7+! ♘xc4 26 ♖xf6! ♕xf6! 27 ♕h7+ ♔f8 28 ♖xa7!, and this would have been quite sufficient to realize my hopes, as there is no defence against mate.

25 ♕h7

At this point I somehow did not believe that my opponent would be able to come up with something. After all, both 26 ♗h6 and 26 ♖xd7! are threatened.

25...♖e6! 26 ♗h6 ♔e8!

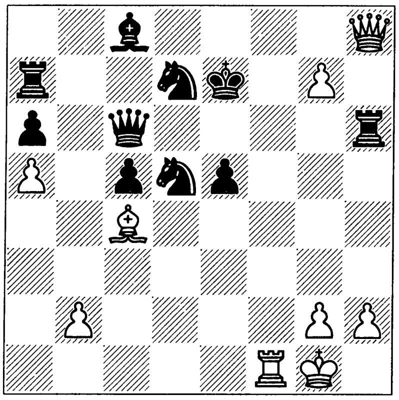
My initial feeling was one of horror, since I am also obliged to give up a rook.

27 ♕xg7 ♘xd5

Fortunately at this point I saw that 28 ♗g5!? ♘7f6 29 ♕xa7 ♖e7 30 ♕b8! would lead to a win, and I was able to look for a prettier alternative. And I found one.

28 ♕h8+ ♔e7 29 g7 ♖xh6

On 29...♖g6 I had planned 30 ♕f8+! ♘xf8 31 gxf8♕+ ♔e6 32 ♗g5!, when White wins.



30 ♖f7+!! ♔xf7

Note that Black now has a great material advantage – two rooks and two knights. But the new queen appears with check, and this proves decisive.

31 g8♕+ ♔e7 32 ♕d8+ 1-0

Black resigned, since he is mated after either 32...♔f7 33 ♕hg8+ or 32...♔e6/d6 33 ♕xh6+.

I might add that the alternative winning continuation on move 23 (23 ♖xd7!), although simpler, is of more or less equal length, so I do not see any aesthetic violation here.

[AS – This game was awarded the brilliancy prize, although I must admit that it was kind of a one-sided struggle.]

Game 20

Lautier – Shirov

Manila Interzonal 1990

These annotations were made in July 1990 and have been published in *Chess in the USSR* and other magazines.

This game was my second encounter against Joel Lautier and I was in quite a competitive mood for two reasons. First, because we were both in a must-win situation fighting for qualification to the Candidates', and second because a few months before this game I had been called 'a second Lautier' in the magazine *Europe Echecs* and I wanted to make it the other way around.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 0-0 d6 6 c4 ♘c6 7 ♘c3 a6 8 h3 ♗d7 9 ♗g5!?

A new move. However, I doubt whether it is any better than the usual 9 ♗e3 or 9 e4, since the reply it provokes, ...h7-h6, may prove useful to Black.

9...h6 10 ♗e3 ♖b8 11 ♘d5!?

Perhaps the most logical development of the 9 ♗g5 idea. In the event of 11 ♕d2 ♔h7 12 ♘d5 Black can play 12...♘e4 13 ♕c2 f5 with a good game – complications such as 14 ♘h4 e6 15 ♗xe4 fxe4 16 ♘f4 g5! 17 ♕xe4+ ♔g8 are in his favour.

[AS – The variation given is wrong because White has 17 ♘xe6!, winning. Probably Black should try 12...b5 instead of my previous suggestion.]

11...b5!?

The first risky decision. The 'normal' continuation was 11...e6 12 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 13 ♕d2 g5!? with an unclear position, which nevertheless did not altogether appeal to me after 14 ♖ac1! With the move in the game Black wishes immediately to seize the initiative – I was aiming only for a win...

[AS – It is curious that five years later Timman played the same line against me in the Donner Memorial (Amsterdam 1995) and I repeated the same moves since I realized during the game that my old play was entirely correct while 11...e6?!, for example, would probably have yielded me a worse position in the variation indicated above.]

12 ♘xf6+ exf6 13 cxb5

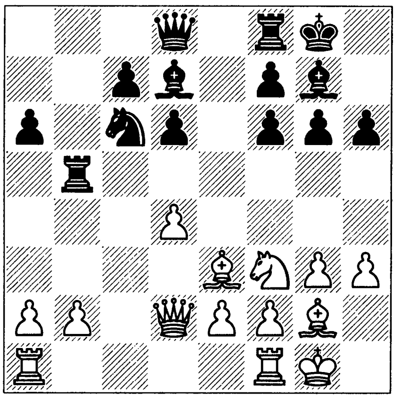
[AS – Here Timman diverged with 13 ♕d2. After 13...bxc4 14 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 15 ♕xh6 ♖xb2 an extremely unclear position arose. White obviously has some compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but since he was in a good tournament situation Timman went for a forced draw which was agreed after 16 ♘h4 ♘e7 17 ♗d5 ♘xd5 18 ♘xg6 hxg6 19 ♕xg6+ ♔h8. But then in the Manila Interzonal both youngsters (Lautier and I) would probably not even have considered variations that might end up with perpetual check – as I have

already said, for both of us a win would mean the last chance to qualify for the Candidates'.]

13...♖xb5!

The second risky decision. Now Black's queenside pawns are irreparably weakened, but on the other hand his pieces coordinate splendidly. The alternative move 13...axb5 did not appeal to me on account of 14 d5! ♘e7 15 ♘d4, with advantage to White, or 14...♘e5 15 ♘d2!, when the black knight remains out of play.

14 ♕d2



14...g5!

The third and final risky decision, after which there will only be sacrifices. 14...♔h7 was also possible, but it is 14...g5! that fits in best with the preceding play. The white pieces are now restricted, especially the bishop at e3, which has no move.

[AS – During my game with Timman I was planning to play 14...♔h7 this time.]

15 d5!

Lautier is also very consistent. He could not allow the manoeuvre ...♘c6-e7-d5, since then he might even have been in difficulties. However, there was also another critical continuation – 15 a4!? In this case Black should play 15...♖b3! (15...♖b8 is weaker on account of 16 d5! ♘e7 17 ♘d4, or 16...♘e5 17 ♖fe1!) 16 d5 ♘e5 17 ♘d4 (17 ♖fe1 ♕b8!) 17...♘c4 18 ♕c2 ♘xe3 19 ♕xb3 ♘xf1 20 ♖xf1 (or any other capture) 20...f5!, when he has everything in order.

15...♘e7 16 ♘d4 ♖xd5!

The first sacrifice, although one that is forced. Retreating the rook would have been an admission of impotence.

17 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 18 ♘f5!

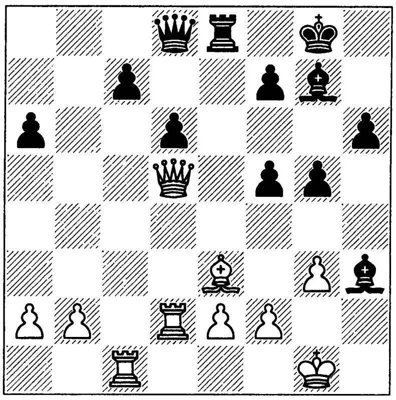
For the moment Lautier clearly wishes to act no less actively than his opponent. On 18 g4 I was intending to play 18...♕c8! (with the possible idea of 19...♗xg4), and Black is not running any risks, since after 19 f3!? ♘xe3 20 ♕xe3 f5! his position is better.

18...♗xf5 19 ♕xd5 ♗xh3 20 ♖fd1?!

20 ♖fc1! looks more logical, when after 20...♗e6! 21 ♕b7 f5! 22 ♖xc7 ♗d5! 23 ♕xd5 (but not 23 ♕a7 f4! 24 ♗b6 ♕f6! with a very strong attack) 23...♕xc7 the position is roughly equal, although it is nevertheless White who has to demonstrate this.

20...♖e8 21 ♖ac1 f5! 22 ♖d2

22 ♗d4 ♗xd4 23 ♕xd4 ♖xe2 would appear to favour Black.



It seems that White has defended everything, and that sooner or later Black's weaknesses on the queenside will tell. So that this should not happen, I decided on my next move.

22...♖xe3!!

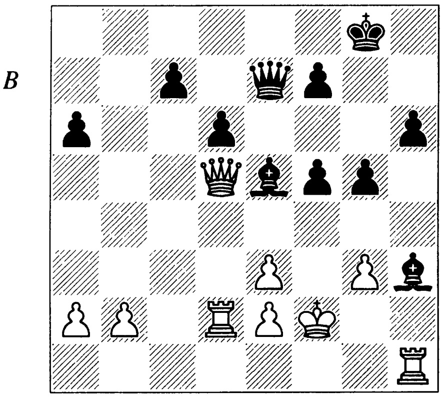
The second and principal sacrifice. Once and for all Black seizes the initiative, and Lautier, who is much happier when he is doing the attacking, is forced to defend. Psychologically he was clearly unprepared for this.

23 fxe3 ♕e7 24 ♔f2

On 24 ♕f3 I was intending 24...♗g4 25 ♕f2 c5!, switching to positional play. Indeed, Black's queen is much more active than White's, his two bishops are effectively not inferior to the two rooks, and his two extra pawns and the weakness of the white king are also important factors.

24...♗e5! 25 ♖h1?

White is rattled. However, the position after 25 ♖d3 c5! 26 ♖h1 g4! or 25 ♕d3 h5! 26 ♖h1 ♗g4 also favours Black. I should mention that after 25 ♖d3 the tempting 25...h5 26 ♕b7 h4 27 ♖xc7 ♗xg3+ 28 ♔g1 ♕e5 is not so strong in view of 29 ♖xf7! (but not 29 ♕d5? ♗f2+!! 30 ♔h1 ♕xd5+ 31 ♖xd5 g4 32 ♖xf5 g3 33 ♖g5+ ♔f8, when Black must win, because there is no defence against 34...♗e6 and 35...h3) 29...d5! 30 ♖g7+! (again the only move; 30 ♖e7 fails to 30...♗f2+! 31 ♔h1 ♗g2+! 32 ♔xg2 ♕g3+ 33 ♔h1 ♕h3 mate) 30...♕xg7 31 ♕xd5+ ♔h7 32 ♕e6! ♕g6 33 ♕e7+, and Black must agree to a repetition of moves by 33...♕g7 34 ♕e6 ♕g6. It is dangerous to play 33...♔h6 34 ♖d8! ♕g7 35 ♕e6+ ♔h5 36 ♖g8 ♕h7 37 ♕e8+ ♔g4 38 ♖h8, although even here there is a pretty draw: 38...♗h2+! 39 ♔f2 (or 39 ♔xh2 ♕c7+) 39...♗g3+ 40 ♔g1 ♗h2+ with a repetition of moves. These variations were discovered later, thanks to a joint analysis with IM Yanis Klovans.



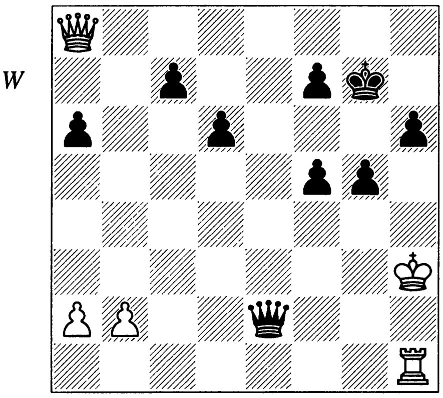
25...♗xg3+!!

The third and decisive sacrifice.

26 ♔xg3 ♕xe3+ 27 ♕f3 ♕xd2 28 ♕a8+

If White takes the bishop with his rook – 28 ♖xh3, after 28...g4 29 ♕a8+ ♔g7 30 ♖h1 ♕e3+ 31 ♔h2 ♕xe2+ 32 ♕g2 ♕e5+ 33 ♔g1 ♔g6! he has no defence against the advance of the pawns (34...h5!, 35...f4, etc.).

28...♔g7 29 ♔xh3 ♕xe2



30 ♕d5?!

The last chance was 30 ♕g2, when I was intending to transpose into the previous variation by 30...g4+ 31 ♔h2 ♕e5+ etc.

30...♔g6

30...♕f2! was slightly more accurate, but it no longer makes any real difference.

31 ♕d4 f4 32 ♖g1 f5 0-1

White resigned. On 33 ♕xf4 there follows 33...♕h5+ winning the queen, and there is no other defence against the mate. (This game was awarded the second brilliancy prize by H. Hasan.)

Game 21

Hauchard – Shirov

World Junior Championship, Santiago 1990

These annotations were made in September 1990 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga*.

My previous game against the same opponent (Game 19) was still fresh in my mind and I wanted to sacrifice more pieces against him. Finally the bishop came as a nice addition to the rooks and knights of that game but the queen was only in the mind's eye this time ...

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4

It is a long time since I played the Nimzo-Indian Defence. The choice of opening is explained by the fact that the French player was seconded by the Soviet grandmaster Iosif Dorfman, and, knowing his experience (four Kasparov-Karpov matches!), I did not want to use my main repertoire.

[AS – I still don't really play the Nimzo, so I can't really say much about the opening of this game.]

4 ♕c2 0-0 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 ♕xc3 b6 7 ♗g5 ♗b7 8 ♘h3

As yet this move has not become as popular as 8 f3. In my opinion, it deserves closer consideration.

8...h6 9 ♗h4 c5

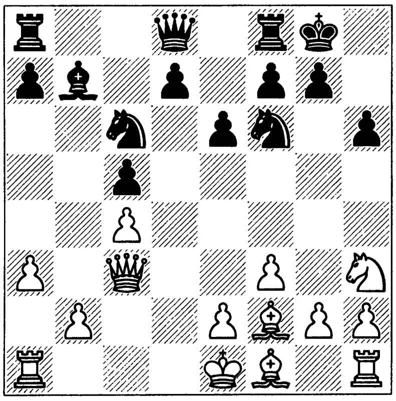
The alternative is 9...d5. But after 10 cxd5 exd5 11 e3 ♘bd7 12 ♗d3 it transpires that, having avoided 8 f3, White should gain the advantage.

10 dxc5 bxc5 11 f3

Not 11 e3 g5! 12 ♗g3 ♘e4 13 ♕c2 ♕a5+ when Black is better.

11...♘c6 12 ♗f2?!

This seems to be a mistake. The correct 12 e3 g5! (12...d5? 13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 14 ♕xf6 gxf6 15 cxd5 exd5 16 ♘f4 is favourable for White) 13 ♗g3 d5! leads to terribly complicated play.



12...d5!

12...♕a5 or 12...d6 also came into consideration, but the move played enables Black to seize the initiative.

13 ♗xc5

13 cxd5 ♘xd5 14 ♕xc5 ♖c8! is totally bad.

13...d4 14 ♕d2 ♖e8

I spent a lot of time calculating the rook sacrifice 14...♘a5!?? 15 ♗xf8 ♘xc4 16 ♕d3 ♖c8. If now 17 ♗b4 then after 17...♘e3 18 ♔f2 e5! Black's attack is indeed dangerous. Unfortunately, Black's idea is destroyed by 17 ♖c1!, when after 17...♘e5 18 ♕d2 ♔xf8 (18...♖xc1+ 19 ♕xc1 ♕xf8 20 ♕c7! wins for White) 19 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 20 e3 it only remains for him to resign. But after 14...♖e8 I no longer see a way to equality for White.

15 e4

15 e3 was no less dangerous for White – 15...e5 16 ♗e2 e4! 17 0-0 (or 17 exd4 exf3 18 gxf3 ♘xd4! 19 ♕xd4 ♗xf3) 17...d3 18 ♗d1 ♘e5 19 ♕c3 exf3 20 gxf3 ♕d7 21 ♘f4 g5 22 ♘d5 ♘xd5 23 cxd5 ♕xd5 24 e4 ♕e6 and Black is clearly on top.

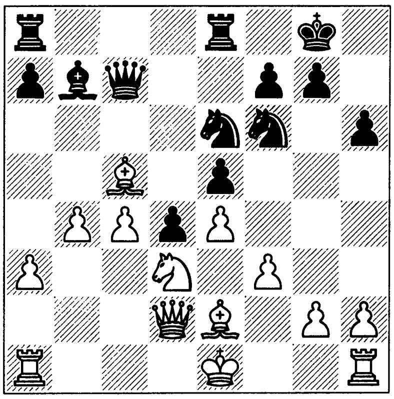
15...e5 16 ♘f2 ♕c7!

It is surprising that, when making this move, I had already seen the possibility of a queen sacrifice on move 28.

17 b4

17 ♘d3 ♘d8 would have been no better for White.

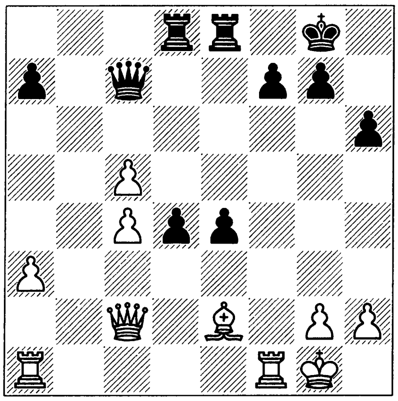
17...♘d8! 18 ♘d3 ♘e6 19 ♗e2



19...♗xe4!

This piece sacrifice is undoubtedly the most energetic continuation, although the quiet 19...♘d7 was also possible.

20 fxe4 ♘xe4 21 ♕c2 ♘4xc5 22 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 23 bxc5 e4 24 0-0 ♖ad8!



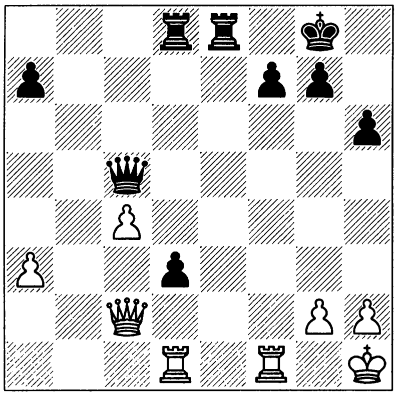
25 ♖ad1?

The decisive mistake. The only chance was 25 ♖fd1 ♕xc5 26 ♔h1 d3 27 ♗xd3 exd3 28 ♖xd3, although after 28...♖xd3 29 ♕xd3 ♖e3! 30 ♕d8+ ♔h7 Black should nevertheless win.

25...♕xc5 26 ♔h1 d3 27 ♗xd3 exd3

After making this move, I stood up too abruptly, and my opponent saw that on 28 ♖xd3 I had prepared 28...♕f5!!, immediately concluding the game. Of course, it was a pity that this did not happen on the board, but it has to be admitted that heavy sacrifices occur most often in variations.

[AS – Probably Hauchard would have seen 28...♕f5 even without my hint.]



28 ♕c3 ♖e3

In the rest of the game I did not realize my advantage in the best way possible, but at the same time White did not gain any chances of saving the game.

29 h3 ♕c6 30 ♔g1 ♖e2 31 ♖f3 ♖c2 32 ♕a5 ♖d6 33 ♕f5

On 33 ♕b5 Black was intending to reply 33...♕a8.

33...♖g6 34 g4 ♖f6 35 ♕xd3 ♕xf3 36 ♕xc2 ♕g3+ 37 ♕g2 ♕e3+ 38 ♔h1 ♖f2 0-1

Game 22
Lutz – Shirov
World Junior Championship, Santiago 1990

These annotations were made in September 1990 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga.*

This game was played in the penultimate round and by that time it was almost clear that my chance to become World Junior Champion was gone. To fight for second or third place was not interesting for me but I still wished to play good chess. This ambition helped me to be relaxed and confident in my last games.

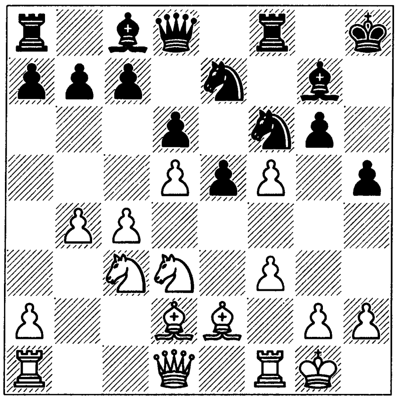
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 ♘e1 ♘d7 10 ♘d3 f5 11 ♗d2 ♔h8 12 b4 ♘f6 13 f3 h5!

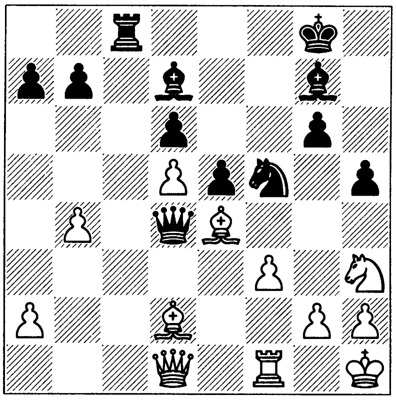
Recently Black has been experiencing considerable difficulties in the variation 13...f4 14 g4!, and so the Riga IM (now GM) Zigurds Lanka has suggested the new move 13...h5. If now 14 c5, then Black can reply 14...f4, transposing into well-known positions that are acceptable for him.

14 exf5 *(D)*

14...♘xf5!

An important improvement. In the game Gouret-Lanka, Torcy 1990, Black continued 14...gxf5 15 f4 e4 16 ♘f2 ♘g4!?, and now White could have gained an advantage by 17 ♘xg4 hxg4 18 ♖c1!, with the idea of 19 ♗e3 and 20 ♗d4.





[AS – Still, White's advantage in that line is not so big.]

15 ♘f2 c6!?

An important move. After the exchange on d5, White's queenside pawns will be more of a weakness than a strength.

16 ♗d3 cxd5 17 ♘xd5

The position arising after 17 cxd5 ♗d7 18 a4!? is also worth studying.

17...♘xd5 18 cxd5 ♗d7

It is clear that once Black has placed his queen at b6 and his rook at c8, he will have everything in order.

19 ♖c1 ♕b6 20 ♔h1 ♖ac8 21 ♖xc8?!

White shouldn't have simply conceded the c-file. 21 ♘h3 was preferable, and if, as in the game, 21...♕d4 22 ♗e4 ♔g8 23 ♕e1! (weaker is 23 ♖e1 ♖xc1 24 ♕xc1 ♖c8 25 ♕d1, leading to a position from the game) he has reasonable play in view of the threat of 24 g4.

21...♖xc8 22 ♘h3 ♕d4 23 ♗e4 ♔g8! *(D)*

An essential move, otherwise 24 ♘g5 with the idea of 25 g4 would have been very unpleasant.

24 ♖e1

24 ♕e1!? was interesting.

24...♘e7!? 25 ♘g1?

Up till now Lutz had played quite well. But now he should have continued 25 ♗g5! ♕xd1 26 ♖xd1 ♔f7 27 ♖c1!, and although after 27...♖xc1+ 28 ♗xc1 ♘f5! Black has good prospects, White's position is by no means hopeless. I should mention that, instead of 27 ♖c1, 27 ♗xe7? ♔xe7 28 ♗xg6 is bad on account of 28...♗xh3 29 gxh3 ♗h6!, when Black, in my opinion, should win.

25...♕b2!

Black at last reminds White of his main weaknesses – his queenside pawns.

26 ♗g5!?

White launches a desperate attack, but this proves unsuccessful, since the black pieces are excellently co-ordinated. However, I no longer know what to suggest instead. 26 a4 is rather strongly met by 26...♖c4, while if 26 ♖e2, then 26...♗b5! 27 ♖f2 ♕xa2 and Black is simply a pawn up. Finally, after 26 f4 exf4 27 ♗xf4 ♕xb4 White again has no play.

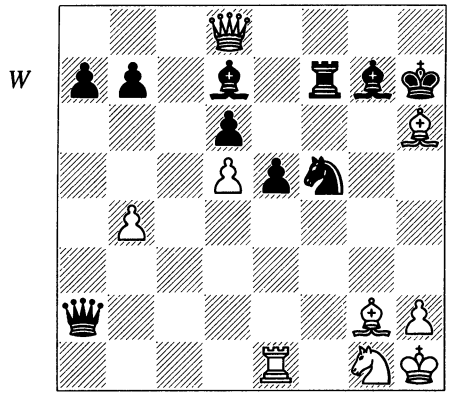
26...♘f5 27 g4 hxg4 28 fxg4 ♘d4 29 ♗xg6 ♕xa2 30 ♗e4 ♖f8! 31 ♕d3

Other moves would also have lost: 31 ♖e3 ♖f2 32 ♖h3 ♗a4 33 ♕c1 ♗c2! or 31 ♘h3 ♗a4 32 ♕d2 ♕xd2 33 ♗xd2 ♗d7! 34 ♖g1 ♘e2 and Black wins in both cases.

31...♗xg4 32 ♕g3 ♗f5 33 ♗g2 ♖f7 34 ♗h6 ♗d7 35 ♕g5 ♘f5 36 ♕d8+ ♔h7 *(D)*

37 ♗c1?

White could have set his opponent much more difficult problems by 37 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 38 ♗e4 ♕f2 39 ♖d1. At any event, it was only with difficulty that in analysis I found a way to win: 39...♕e3! 40 ♕h4+ ♔g6 41 ♘f3 (or 41 ♖e1 ♕g5 and wins) 41...♖h7 (in fact 41...♕xf3+ is a lot simpler than 41...♖h7; White may try 41 ♖d3 instead of 41 ♘f3 but the endgame after 41...♕xg1+ 42 ♔xg1 ♔f7+ 43 ♕g3 ♘xg3



44 hxg3 is, of course, winning for Black) 42 ♕g4+ ♔f6 43 ♖e1 ♕h6, intending to play ...♖g7!

37...♗f6

Now it is all very simple. There followed:

38 ♕b8 ♖g7 39 ♗e4 ♕f2 40 ♖d1 ♕h4 0-1

With the time-trouble over, White resigned.

Game 23

Shirov – Wedberg

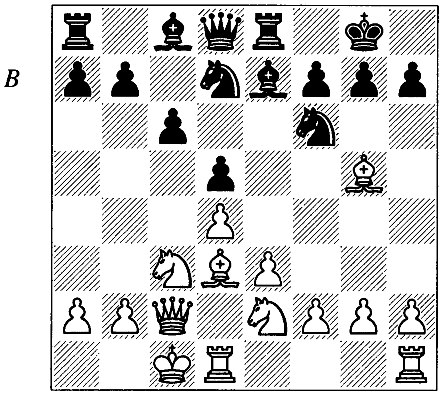
Stockholm 1990

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 51.*

After my successful performance in the Rilton Cup (1989-1990) I got another invitation to Stockholm, this time to a round-robin category 11 event in September 1990. The tournament was played in the same building and the familiar atmosphere helped my mental attitude and tournament routine.

I even felt a bit unhappy about my seven out of nine because some draws were made from promising positions. Neither was I satisfied with the quality of my games as I felt that I was playing in a slightly boring style. However this game I like. The way an opening advantage was transformed into victory was a bit unusual, given my style.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗g5 ♗e7 6 e3 ♘bd7 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 ♘ge2 ♖e8 9 ♕c2 c6 10 0-0-0!?



This long castling was introduced into serious tournament practice by Kasparov in his game against Campora at the Dubai Olympiad in 1986 and I myself had a lot of success with it before I got a lost position against Milos in Buenos Aires 1993. Although I won that game too, I still undertook not to play 10 0-0-0 anymore.

10...♕a5

Probably not best. Black should either immediately start the pawn assault with 10...b5!? or 10...a5!?, or go for a theoretical line with 10...♘f8. Here I have some experience of 11 ♔b1 a5 12 f3. In one game I managed to get a clear advantage after 12...♘e4 13 ♗xe7 ♘xc3+ 14 ♘xc3 ♕xe7 15 ♖he1 ♗e6 (15...b5 16 e4 is even worse for Black) 16 ♕f2! ♖ad8 17 g4 ♘d7 18 h4 ♘b6 19 g5 c5 20 f4! (Shirov-Schüssler, Gausdal 1990). However much stronger than 12...♘e4 is 12...b5 13 ♗xf6?! (13 ♘g3 a4 14 ♘ce2, which occurred in the game Greenfeld-King, Budapest Perenyi 1989, is to be preferred) 13...♗xf6 14 e4 a4! 15 exd5 b4 16 ♘xa4 (16 ♘e4 cxd5 17 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 is clearly better for Black) 16...cxd5 and Black had a very strong initiative for just a pawn, in the game Shirov-Milos, Buenos Aires Najdorf 1993.

11 ♔b1

The immediate 11 ♘g3?! doesn't seem good in view of 11...h6! with the idea 12 h4?! ♗b4! leading to a slight advantage for Black.

11...b5 12 ♘g3!

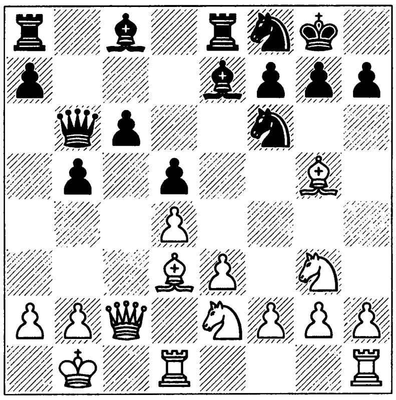
But now it's time to improve the knight's position.

12...♘f8?!

Now White can immediately start attacking Black's weakness on c6. Sharper would have been 12...h6, although after 13 ♗f4! (not 13 h4 ♘b6!, intending ...♘c4) 13...♘b6 (13...g5 allows a strong attack after 14 ♗e5 ♘xe5 15 dxe5 ♘g4 16 h4! gxh4 17 ♗h7+! ♔h8 18 ♗f5! ♘xe5 19 ♗xc8 ♖axc8 20 ♘f5; the two extra pawns do not really help Black) 14 ♘ge2 ♘c4 15 ♔a1 I still like White.

13 ♘ce2 ♕b6

The only move. 13...♗d7? loses to 14 ♘f5 ♗xf5 15 ♗xf5 ♕b6 16 ♖c1 g6 17 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18 ♗h3.



14 ♖c1 ♗d7 15 ♘f5! ♗d8 16 ♘eg3!?

Trying to press Black on both sides of the board. Simplification with 16 ♘f4?! ♘e4! 17 ♗xd8 ♖axd8 would reduce White's advantage.

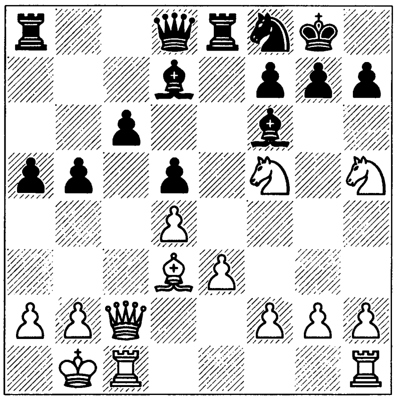
16...a5

16...g6 would have been very dangerous in view of 17 ♘h6+ ♔g7 18 h4! ♘g8 (forced) 19 ♗xd8 ♖axd8 20 ♘xg8 ♔xg8 21 h5, when White can combine attack with strategic pressure.

17 ♗xf6!?

Going for a forced line which makes White's edge even more durable. I didn't like 17 h4 in view of 17...♖a7!?, protecting the b7 square and depriving White of his intended knight manoeuvre.

17...♗xf6 18 ♘h5 ♕d8



Again this looks like the only move. If 18...♖e6?! 19 g4!, intending 20 g5, is very strong.

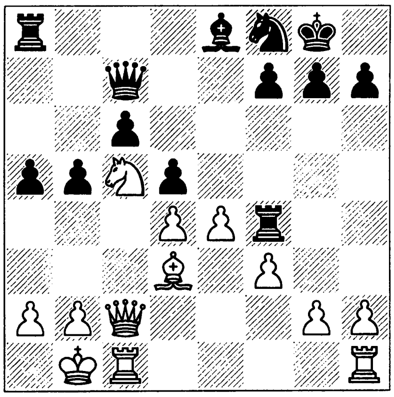
19 ♘d6 ♖e6 20 ♘b7! ♕c7 21 ♘c5 ♖d6 22 ♘xf6+! ♖xf6 23 f3

This is the position I had been aiming for. A powerful knight on c5, a stronger bishop, standard play in the centre – what can be done against that? Wedberg doesn't make it easy, however.

23...♗e8

I was planning to answer 23...♖d6 with 24 ♕f2!, and if 24...♘e6?! then 25 ♗xb5! is clearly better for White

24 e4 ♖f4!?

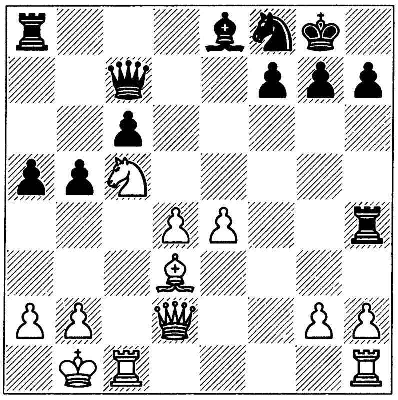


A good try. 24...dxe4 25 ♘xe4! ♖f5 (or 25...♖h6 26 ♗xb5) 26 ♘c3! ♖h5 (26...♖f4?

27 ♘d5 wins) 27 ♘xb5 ♕b6 28 ♘d6 is curtains.

25 ♕d2 dxe4 26 fxe4 ♖h4! *(D)*

W



Black sets up some play against the h2 and d4 pawns and White needs to play accurately.

27 g3 ♖h6 28 e5! ♖d8 29 ♕e3

Threatening 28 ♘e4.

29...♘e6

29...♕b6 would not be a great improvement due to 30 ♖hf1! ♘e6 (30...♖xh2 31 e6 wins) 31 ♘xe6 fxe6 (31...♖xe6 32 ♖f4! wins) 32 ♕f3 ♗g6 33 ♗xg6 hxg6 34 h4! with a huge advantage for White.

30 ♗xb5! ♘xd4 31 ♗c4

White's advantage in pawn structure is smoothly transformed into piece superiority. Black does his utmost to co-ordinate his position but his task proves to be impossible.

31...♗d7!

31...♘f5 can be answered by 32 ♕e4 ♘e7 33 h4! 'arresting' the rook on h6.

32 a3!

White is in no hurry, as he only needs to improve the position of his pieces.

32...♗f5+ 33 ♔a2 ♗e6

33...♘e6 would also have been strategically dead after 34 ♖hf1! ♘xc5 35 ♖xf5 ♘e6 36 h4.

34 ♘xe6 fxe6

34...♘xe6 35 h4!, planning ♖hf1-f2 and ♖df1, is more or less the same as in the previous note.

35 ♖hf1 c5 36 ♖f2!

White has achieved his best possible set-up and has various winning ideas such as 37 ♖cf1 and 38 g4!? In time-trouble Black throws in the towel after just one move.

36...♖h5? 37 ♕xd4! 1-0

I quite like this game which, by the way, secured victory in the tournament.

Game 24
Shirov – Piket
Groningen 1990/91

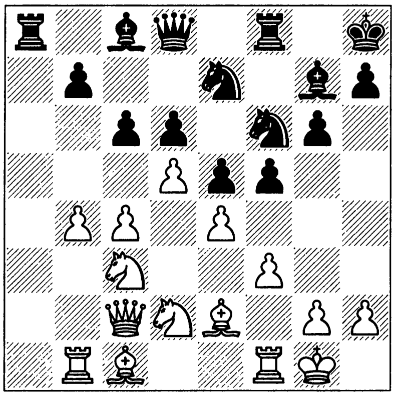
These annotations were made in January 1991 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga*.

This game is memorable for me because it was very much liked by Alexander Koblents, who called me soon after he saw it published. That telephone conversation was one of my last contacts with the old maestro as he soon moved to Berlin where he lived his last years. He passed away in 1993.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 ♘d2 a5 10 a3 ♘d7 11 ♖b1 f5 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 ♔h8 14 ♕c2 ♘f6 15 f3 c6

According to Piket, this was a new move, which he had prepared specifically for this game. But I think that 15...c6 had already occurred somewhere before, with White replying 16 ♔h1.

W



16 dxc6!

I believe this continuation to be the strongest. 16 ♘b3? cxd5 17 cxd5 ♕b6+ is bad for White, while I rejected 16 ♔h1 on account of 16...♘h5 17 g3 fxe4 18 fxe4 (18 ♘dxe4 ♘f5 is slightly better for Black) 18...♗h3 19 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 20 ♘f3 ♗h6!, with excellent counterplay for Black. Also interesting is 16...f4!?, with the idea of 17...♘h5, and, if given the opportunity, 18...♘g3+ (in fact this is what Piket had been intending to play).

16...bxc6

On 16...♘xc6 I would have replied 17 ♘b5!, with the idea of 18 ♕d3, when White has the advantage.

17 b5 cxb5

The immediate 17...d5 doesn't work on account of 18 b6! ♖b8 19 ♗a3, with a great advantage to White.

18 ♘xb5!

18 cxb5 could now have been answered by 18...d5 19 b6 ♗b7, when all Black's problems are solved. But now it will not be easy for him to defend his d6 pawn.

18...♘h5 19 ♘b3!

But not 19 g3 ♘c6! 20 ♕d3 ♘d4, when the position becomes unclear.

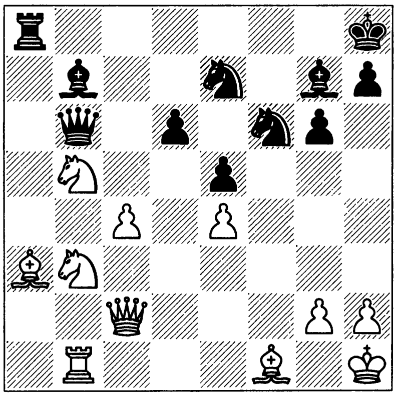
19...fxe4 20 fxe4 ♕b6+ 21 ♔h1 ♖xf1+

The only move. Totally bad was 21...♘f4 22 ♗xf4 exf4 23 ♖bd1 ♗e5 24 ♘xd6! ♗xd6 25 ♕c3+! ♔g8 26 c5 ♗xc5 27 ♗c4+ ♗e6 28 ♘xc5, when White wins.

22 ♗xf1 ♘f6 23 ♗a3 ♗b7

Understandably, 23...♘g4 24 c5 dxc5 25 ♗xc5 ♕f6 26 h3 did not appeal to Black at all.

W



24 c5 dxc5

On 24...♕c6 I was intending to sacrifice a piece – 25 ♘xd6! ♖xa3 26 ♘f7+ ♔g8 27 ♕c4 and White wins, since apart from other knight discoveries, he is threatening 28 ♘h6+ ♔h8 29 ♕g8+! and 30 ♘f7 mate.

25 ♘xc5!

White has to play accurately. After 25 ♗xc5 ♖c8! his advantage would have disappeared.

25...♕c6 26 ♖d1!?

I preferred this move to the tempting 26 ♕d3!?, since I could not find anything in particular in reply to 26...♘g4 27 ♕f3 h5 28 ♘xb7 ♕xb7 (28...♖f8? 29 ♘d8! ♕b6 30 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 31 ♕xf7 ♘f2+ 32 ♕xf2 ♕xf2 33 ♗xe7 wins for White), and I did not want to have to be satisfied with a slight advantage after 29 ♗c5!

26...h6 27 ♕b3! ♘fg8

Now 27...♘g4 is no longer so strong, since White replies 28 ♖d6 ♕c8 29 ♔g1!, when there is no way for Black to co-ordinate his forces, whereas the white pieces are placed on dominant squares (29...♕f8 30 ♕f3! ♗c6 31 ♖xc6!, or 29...♗c6 30 ♘e6!).

[*Translator's note* – After 31 ♖xc6! Black can play 31...♕xf3 32 gxf3 ♘xc6 33 fxg4 ♖xa3 34 ♘xa3 ♗f8 with equal chances.]

28 ♗c4!

At this point I could not believe that the battle could drag on for long. All my pieces are on the attack, and are operating so harmoniously. But ...

28...♕b6!

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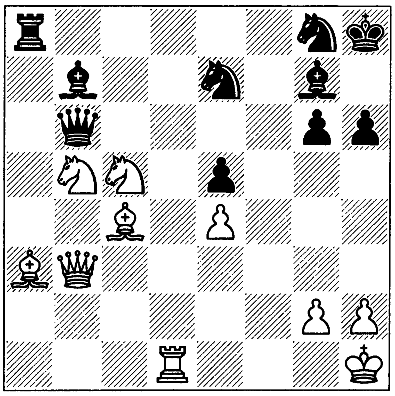


It turns out that Black's forces are also well co-ordinated, and are ready to parry White's onslaught. Here I was obliged to think. I failed to find a forced win, although I managed to calculate some variations. As always, there was little time left, but I realized that the preceding play had to be brought to a logical completion. The remainder of the game resembles a genuine mêlée, but by no means a finishing blow.

29 ♘d7 ♕f2 30 ♘d6 ♗c6!

After 30...♗a6 31 ♘xe5! ♗xc4 32 ♘exc4 it would all have been immeasurably easier for White.

31 ♗c5 ♕h4

In time-trouble I was afraid of the queen sacrifice 31...♕f4 32 ♖f1 ♗xd7 33 ♖xf4 exf4, but now I realize that after 34 h3 the absence of Black's commander condemns him to a rapid demise.

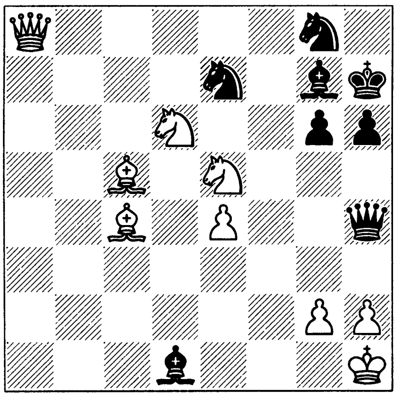
32 ♘xe5!

The first blow against the opposing army (32...♗xe5 33 ♘f7+) and a feeling of contentment ... but an instant reply –

32...♗a4!

... and a feeling of horror, since I had overlooked this move. I had to respond likewise, by also attacking a rook.

33 ♕b7 ♗xd1 34 ♕xa8 ♔h7



Piket played so quickly, that he effectively gave me no respite at all, whereas my clock was inexorably advancing. At first I wanted, without thinking, to reply 35 ♘d3, but I saw that after 35...♘f6! there would be new threats to parry. I had to compose myself, quickly evaluate all the possibilities, and land a decisive blow.

35 ♘xg6!

As soon as this move is made on the board, the smoke disperses, and it becomes clear that the black king's defences have been destroyed.

35...♕h5

Forced. Black loses after both 35...♔xg6 36 ♗xg8, and 35...♕e1+ 36 ♗g1 ♗d4 37 ♘f8+ ♔h8 38 ♘f7+ ♔g7 39 ♘e6+.

36 ♘xe7 ♘xe7 37 ♘f5

Had I had more time, I would have concluded the game differently, by 37 e5! ♗xe5 (37...♕xe5 38 ♕g8+!! ♘xg8 39 ♗d3+ ♔h8 40 ♘f7 mate) 38 ♗d3+ ♔g7 (38...♘g6 39 ♕b7+ ♔h8 40 ♘f7+ ♔g8 41 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 42 ♗xg6 and 39...♗g7 40 ♘f5 are also winning for White) 39 ♘e8+ ♔f7 40 ♗c4+ ♔g6 41 ♕a6+ ♔h7 42 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 43 ♕xf6 ♕xc5 44 ♕f7+ ♔h8 45 ♕f8+ ♔h7 46 ♗d3+ and White wins.

37...♗e5 38 ♗g1 ♗f3!

This is not yet the last gasp, but a final trick with the opponent's flag about to fall.

39 ♕b7!

Of course not 39 ♘xe7 ♗xg2+ 40 ♔xg2 ♕g4+ 41 ♔f1 ♕d1+, with a draw by perpetual check.

39...♗xg2+

But this is desperation. The only move was 39...♗f6, although after 40 ♘e3 ♗g4 41 ♘d5 White nevertheless wins.

40 ♔xg2 ♕g5+ 41 ♔h1 1-0

Game 25

Adams – Shirov

Biel 1991

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, and based on my notes in *Informator 52*.

In my first 15th category tournament I managed to perform well. Not only the result (9½ out of 14 and a clear first place) but also the games, full of fight, gave me a feeling of satisfaction. One may say I was lucky in several cases and in a way it's true because somehow the situations of mutual tension worked out well for me and gave me some extra points.

I put a lot of energy into the games and I didn't get tired. One week later I went to the Lloyds Bank open in London and won it as well. Unfortunately nowadays I am less consistent ...

My game against Adams is a typical example of my play in Biel: aggressive play from the opening, putting on the pressure, a little risk in complications and getting the upper hand.

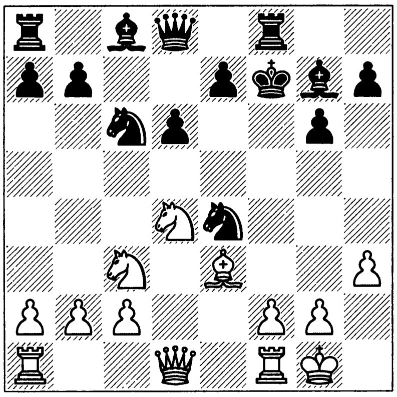
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗c4 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 h3 ♘c6 9 ♗e3

I hadn't expected this system from Michael but fortunately I had something in mind.

9...♘xe4! 10 ♗xf7+

10 ♘xe4 d5 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♗d3 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 should be about equal but the text has always had a good reputation. Can there be anything wrong with it?

10...♔xf7!



As far as I know this novelty was found by the Polish (but born and raised in Latvia) grandmaster Alexander Wojtkiewicz while he was spending time in a Soviet prison (where he found himself after trying to avoid the army – many ex-Soviet chessplayers might recall this problem with a feeling of horror) in 1986 or 1987. it was shown to me by Alexander Shabalov a few months before this game. 10...♖xf7 had been automatic before.

11 ♘xe4

11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♘xe4 ♔g8 is not what White normally wants.

11...♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 e5

Now Black's idea is clear – he will have two powerful central pawns, since White doesn't have 13 ♗c5 (as would have been the case with 10...♖xf7).

13 ♗e3

13 ♕f3+? ♔e8 is clearly better for Black.

13...d5 14 ♘g3

14 ♗g5 ♕d7 15 ♘c3 h6 16 ♗h4 d4 17 ♘e4 ♕c6 18 ♖e1 ♗f5 19 f3 ♖ac8 20 c3 ♔g8 21 ♕b3+ ♔h7 22 ♖ad1 led to the mess in Jansa-Hellers, Herning 1991, but Black seems to have no problems whatsoever.

14...♔g8

I prefer this to 14...d4 15 ♗d2 ♔g8 16 ♘e4 (16 c3!? is also interesting) 16...♕b6 17 b3 ♗f5 18 ♖e1 ♖ac8 19 ♖c1!, intending 19...♕c6 20 f3, when the position seems unclear to me.

15 c3 ♗e6 16 ♘e2!

Planning 17 f4 to block Black's centre. The immediate 16 f4? would have failed to 16...d4! (also 16...exf4 17 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 18 ♗xf4 ♕b6+ 19 ♔h2 ♕xb2 is clearly better for Black) 17 cxd4 exf4.

16...g5! 17 ♕d2

17 ♘g3 h6 18 ♘h5 ♗h8, with the idea 19 h4 ♕d7!, seems to favour Black slightly.

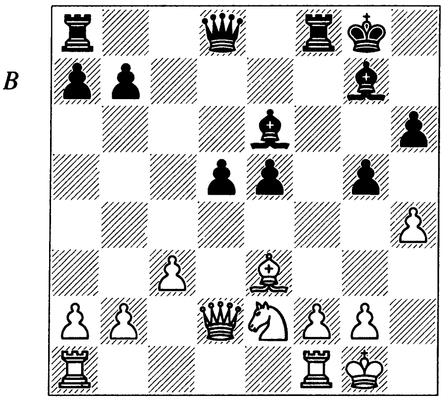
17...h6 18 h4! *(D)*

White finally manages to break Black's pawn structure but considerably weakens his kingside in the process, which Black will attack. Still, I think this is the best that White could do.

18...gxh4 19 ♗xh6 ♕f6!

Black has always to be very careful about f2-f4, for example lines like 19...♖f7 20 ♗g5! ♗f6 21 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 22 f4 or 19...♗xh6 20 ♕xh6 ♕f6 21 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 22 f4! ♗g4 23 fxe5 ♖xf1+ 24 ♔xf1 yield White some advantage.

20 ♗g5



Adams goes for a pawn but later on he clearly underestimates my attack and doesn't cope with the complications. However, from a chess point of view his decision is entirely correct! The exchange of bishops would also have had unclear consequences, for example 20 ♗xg7!? ♕xg7 21 f4 h3! and now White has two options:

a) 22 g3 (a risky one) 22...h2+! 23 ♔xh2 d4! 24 cxd4 ♗d5 25 dxe5 (25 ♔g1 exf4) 25...♕h7+ 26 ♔g1 ♖ad8 and I prefer Black despite the fact that he is three pawns down;

b) 22 ♖f2 (intending 23 g3) 22...♖f6! 23 g3 exf4 24 ♖xf4 (24 ♘xf4 ♕xg3+ 25 ♔h1 ♗f5! 26 ♕xd5+ ♗e6!) 24...♖xf4 25 ♕xf4 ♗g4! and the chances are roughly equal.

20...♕g6 21 ♗xh4 ♖f5!

Threatening 22...♖h5. During and after the game I thought that my attack by this point was already nearly decisive. Closer analysis proves that this wasn't true, but it is certainly psychologically unpleasant to be White in this position.

22 f4

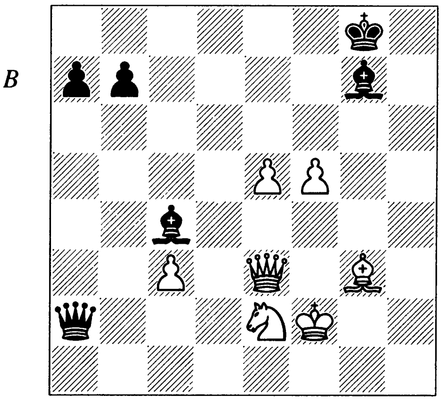
22 ♘g3 ♖f4 23 ♗e7 ♔f7, followed by 24...♖h8, looks extremely dangerous for White.

22...♕g4!

Now 22...♖h5? fails to 23 ♗g5!

23 ♗g5?

But here this move is a big mistake. 23 ♗e7 (which I thought was the White's only move!) is also extremely dangerous due to 23...♖e8 24 ♗d6 d4! with the idea of 25 ♗xe5? ♗d5! and Black wins after 26 ♘xd4 ♖fxe5! 27 fxe5 ♗h6 28 ♕e2 ♗e3+. However, the modest retreat 23 ♗g3 would have suddenly posed Black severe problems in developing his attack. His best chance is probably still 23...d4 (23...♗h6 24 ♖ae1 is better for White since 24...d4 fails to 25 ♘xd4!) 24 fxe5 dxc3 25 bxc3 ♖xf1+ 26 ♖xf1 ♗c4 27 ♖f3 ♖f8 and the two bishops offer Black reasonable compensation for the two pawns. However, very accurate play is required since in fact White is still better after 28 ♕e3 (but not 28 ♕d4 ♕xd4+ 29 ♘xd4 ♗xa2 and the a-pawn is strong) 28...♖xf3 (now 28...♗xa2? is wrong due to 29 ♕xa7 and the bishop is hanging with check.) 29 gxf3 ♕g6 30 ♔f2 ♕a6 31 f4! ♕xa2 32 f5



White's kingside pawns look terrific but probably Black is not lost because of the pin and the aforementioned a-pawn. He should now continue 32...♕c2! 33 f6 ♗f8 34 ♕g5+ ♔f7 35 ♕h5+ ♕g6 36 ♕f3 ♕c2! and since the line 37 ♕xb7+ ♔g6 38 ♕f3 ♗c5+ 39 ♔f1 ♕f5 40 ♔g2 ♕xf3+ 41 ♔xf3 a5 leads to a draw, I don't see any real winning chances for White. This proves that had Adams played 23 ♗g3 he would have had a clear practical advantage, because the line indicated above would have been very difficult to find over the board.

23...♖af8!

Now the threat of 24...d4! is lethal. I always enjoy it when all my pieces are in the attack.

24 ♖f2

24 ♖f3 ♖xg5 25 ♖g3 would not help because of 25...♕xg3, while 24 ♖ae1 d4 should be more or less the same story as in the game.

24...d4! 25 cxd4 exf4 26 ♗xf4

26 ♘xf4 ♖xg5 27 ♘xe6 ♖xf2 28 ♕xf2 ♕xe6 also loses the house.

26...♗c4

Now Black wins the piece. There followed

27 ♗e3 ♖xf2 28 ♗xf2 ♗xe2 0-1

Game 26

Shirov – Kožul

Biel 1991

This game was annotated in August 1991 and has been published in various magazines.

I knew that Kožul played the Grünfeld regularly and I hoped to get a chance to play a novelty which I had in mind. However, although he diverged from my analysis earlier, I still managed to win a nice attacking game. This had the added benefit that shortly afterwards I was able to use my idea to make another point.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 0-0 9 ♗e3 ♘c6 10 ♖c1!?

In recent years this continuation has become very popular.

10...cxd4

10...♗d7 and 10...♕c7 occur less frequently.

11 cxd4 ♕a5+ 12 ♔f1 ♗d7

Weaker is 12...♗g4 13 f3 ♗d7 14 h4, as occurred in the game Polugayevsky-I. Sokolov, Sarajevo 1987. White gained the advantage, since the advance of the pawn to f3 proved to be in his favour. Interesting positions also arise after 12...♖d8 13 h4 h5 or 13...h6.

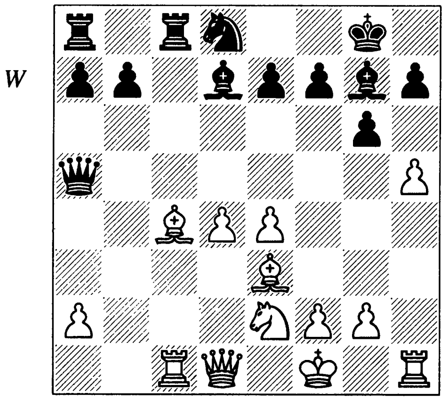
[AS – The last word in this variation is 12...♕a3!? The games Ftačnik-I. Gurevich (Biel Interzonal 1993) and Kamsky-Anand (Las Palmas 1995) are good examples of this.]

13 h4 ♖fc8

The game develops to White's advantage after 13...♖ac8 14 h5 e5 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 d5 ♘d4 17 ♘xd4 exd4 18 ♗d2, as in Shirov-Pieshina, Daugavpils 1990.

[AS – That game continued 18...♕b6 19 ♔g1 ♖fe8 20 ♖b1 ♗a4!? 21 ♕f1 ♕c5 22 ♗d3 (White stands slightly better here) 22...♕a3?! 23 ♖xb7 ♖c3?! 24 ♗xc3 dxc3 25 ♕b1 ♗d4 26 ♖h3 ♕c5 27 ♕b4 ♗xf2+ 28 ♔f1 c2 29 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 30 ♗xc2 ♗xc2 31 ♖c3 (now White is winning) 31...♗b6 32 ♖xc2 ♖xe4 33 d6 ♖d4 34 d7 ♔g7 1-0 (35 ♖c8 and wins).]

14 h5 ♘d8



Theory considers that in this position Black has good counter-chances. White's usual continuations are 15 ♗d2 and 15 ♕d3, but I preferred another move.

15 f3

The idea of this move is relatively simple. Now the white pieces are optimally placed for the coming attack on the kingside. Also possible is 15 f4, see Game 42 (Shirov-Kamsky)

15...b5?!

Preferable was 15...♗b5 16 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 17 ♔f2 ♖xc1 18 ♕xc1 ♘c6 19 ♕b1 ♕a6 20 hxg6 hxg6 21 e5 ♖d8 22 ♕e4 ♕xa2 23 ♕h4 ♔f8, as in Shirov-I. Gurevich, World Junior Championship, Santiago 1990).

[AS – This note is just a trick. See the next game, played a few weeks later in London.]

16 ♗b3 ♖xc1 17 ♗xc1 ♕b6?!

A mistake. Kožul sees the threat of 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♗h6, and is ready to neutralize it with 19...♗xh6 20 ♖xh6 ♕f6. But ...

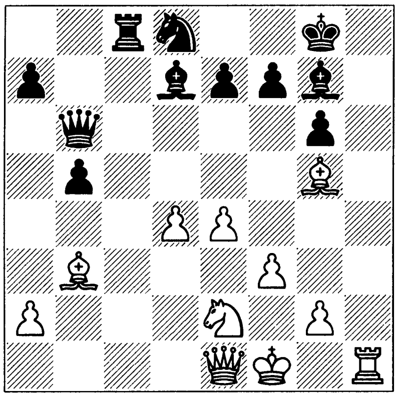
18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♕e1!

Very simple: 20 ♕h4 is threatened.

19...♖c8 20 ♗g5!

Better than 20 ♕h4 ♖xc1+ 21 ♘xc1 ♕xd4 22 ♕xe7 ♘e6, with fair compensation for the exchange.

B



20...♘e6 21 ♗xe7 g5

The only move.

22 d5 ♘d4 23 ♗xg5 b4 24 ♗e3! ♕a6

On 24...♗b5 there follows 25 ♔f2, and White is close to a win.

25 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 26 ♕d2 ♗g7

Black appears to have compensation for the pawn. What is to be done against 27...♗b5?

27 d6! ♗b5

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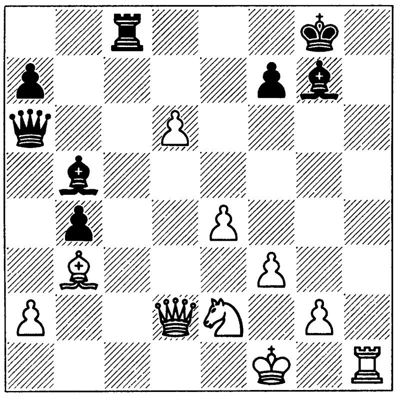

28 ♗xf7+! ♔f8

Or 28...♔xf7 29 ♕d5+ ♔f8 30 ♕f5+ ♔g8 31 ♕e6+ ♔f8 32 ♖h5! ♗xe2+ 33 ♔f2 ♗d4+ 34 ♔g3, and Black cannot save his king without great losses, for example 34...♕b7 35 ♖f5+ ♔g7 36 ♖g5+ ♔h8 37 ♕h3+.

29 ♗e6 ♖c1+

29...♗xe2+ 30 ♔f2 is no better.

30 ♕xc1 ♗xe2+ 31 ♔f2 ♗d4+ 32 ♔g3 ♕xd6+ 33 ♕f4+ ♔e7 34 ♖h7+ 1-0

Game 27

Shirov – Ernst

London (Lloyds Bank) 1991

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 52*.

Before starting to annotate this game, I would like to delve a little into its history. In the 1990 World Junior Championship in Santiago, I lost a decisive game against Ilya Gurevich in the same variation of the Grünfeld Defence. After that game I tried to find an improvement for White, but did not succeed for almost a year. In June 1991, after a break of a couple of weeks from chess, I decided to undertake some preparation for the Biel tournament. I set up the position after Black's 21st move and in the same second the move a2-a4 occurred to me. Although it doesn't win immediately, as I had originally thought, it certainly promises White the better chances. The Polugayevsky variation (i.e. the variation characterized by 10 ♖c1) may already be part of chess history, but I still hope to have that kind of inspiration over the chessboard sometimes.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♖c1 *(D)*

10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕a5+ 12 ♔f1 ♗d7 13 h4 ♖fc8 14 h5 ♘d8 15 f3

When I played this move against Ilya Gurevich in the World Junior, it was a novelty.

15...♗b5

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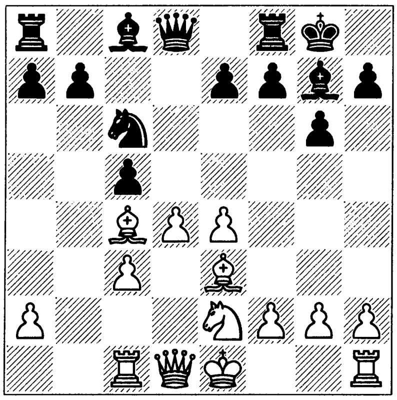

In Moscow 1992, Gata Kamsky defeated me with 15...♗a4, but as some recent games have shown, I could have obtained a promising attack by sacrificing a piece. In any case, this move does not seem to be of much interest for the current theory of the Polugayevsky variation.

16 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 17 ♔f2

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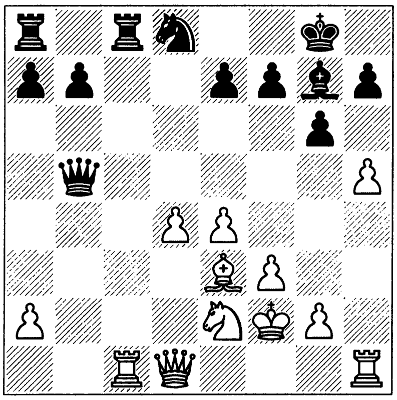


17...♖xc1

The endgame after 17...♕b2 18 ♕b3 ♕xb3 19 axb3 ♘c6 is slightly in White's favour, but perhaps Black should go in for this.

18 ♕xc1 ♘c6 19 ♕b1

The direct attack 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 ♕g1?! fails to 20...♘b4 (but not 20...♕b2? 21 ♕h2 ♘xd4 22 ♕h7+ ♔f8 23 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 24 ♗xd4+ with a winning position) 21 ♕h2 ♘d3+ 22 ♔g3 f5! 23 ♕h7+ ♔f7 24 ♖h6? f4+! 25 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 26 ♔xf4 ♕a6! and Black wins.

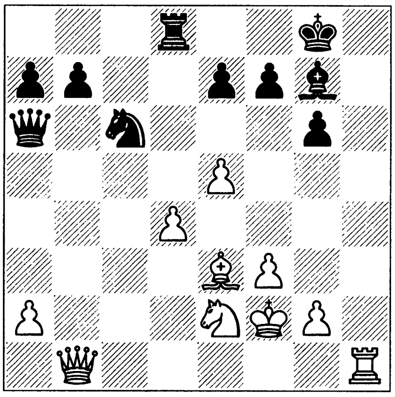
19...♕a6

Now exchanging queens is very dangerous for Black, for example 19...♕xb1 20 ♖xb1 b6 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 ♖c1 ♘b4 23 ♖c4! with a clear advantage for White.

20 hxg6 hxg6 21 e5! ♖d8

White also stands better after 21...♖c8 22 e6! ♘d8 (22...f5 23 g4!) 23 exf7+ ♔xf7 (alternatively, 23...♘xf7 24 ♘f4 ♖c6 25 d5) 24 ♖h4!

W



22 a4!

This is my improvement over the Shirov-I. Gurevich game, which went 22 ♕e4? ♕xa2 23 ♕h4 ♔f8 24 ♖d1 (24 ♕h7 ♘xd4 wins for Black) 24...♘xe5 25 ♕h7 g5! 26 ♖d2 (26 ♗xg5 ♘g6 is also better for Black – I. Gurevich) 26...♕a5 27 ♘g3 ♕b6! 28 ♘f5 ♕g6! 29 ♕xg7+ ♕xg7 30 ♘xg7 ♘c4 and Black won the endgame.

22...♘a5?

This loses immediately. Both 22...♕xa4 23 ♕xb7 e6 and 22...♔f8 (Lobron-I. Gurevich, New York 1992) are quite acceptable for Black, but I believe that White has the better chances in both cases.

23 ♕e4 ♖c8

If 23...♘c4 then 24 ♗h6 wins.

24 ♗h6! *(D)*

Not 24 ♕h4? ♖c2.

24...♗h8

24...♕c6 would have prolonged the game without changing the result, because the ending after 25 ♕h4 g5 26 ♕xg5 ♕g6 27 ♕xg6 fxg6 28 ♘f4 is hopeless for Black.

25 ♗g5 ♕e6

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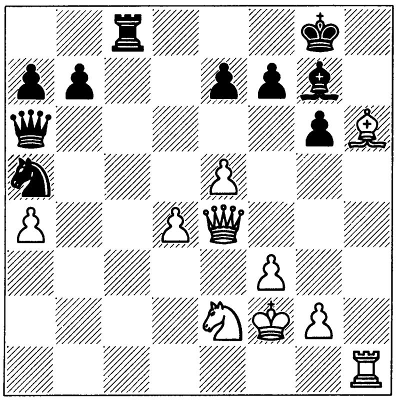


If 25...♗g7 then 26 ♗xe7 with an inevitable 27 ♕h4, winning.

26 ♕h4 1-0

Black resigned because 26...♗g7 27 ♕h7+ ♔f8 28 ♗h6 is too obvious.

Game 28

Shirov – Speelman

London (Lloyds Bank) 1991

These notes were made in 1991, with the assistance of, and translated by, Jon Levitt.

1 d4 d6 2 e4 ♘f6 3 ♗d3

Normally I play 3 ♘c3, but the game Anand-Timman, Linares 1991, had made a big impression on me.

3...e5 4 c3 ♘c6 5 ♘f3 ♗e7

In the aforementioned game Timman continued 5...♗g4, but after 6 d5 ♘e7 7 c4 ♘g6 8 g3 ♗e7 9 ♘c3 White had an edge.

6 d5 ♘b8 7 c4

Black has lost two tempi with his queen's knight, whereas White has lost only one with the c-pawn, so White has a clear advantage.

7...0-0 8 ♘c3 ♘bd7 9 ♗c2

Usually such a move is only played after ...♘c5, but I was afraid that after 9 0-0, 9...♘h5 is possible (with the plan ...g7-g6, ...♘g7, ...f7-f5). I thought that 9 ♗c2 prevented 9...♘h5 in view of 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11 ♕xh5 (when White's bishop on d3 is no longer *en prise*). It was only after Black's reply that I saw 11...♗g4. However, 9 ♗c2 is quite a good move anyway, since it improves the position of the bishop.

9...♘h5

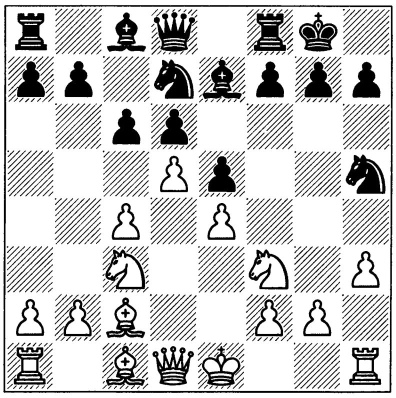
Perhaps 9...c6 was better, but after 10 ♖b1 a5 11 a3 White has the more attractive prospects.

10 h3

Threatening 11 ♘xe5. Now 9 ♗c2 is shown as more flexible than 9 0-0 after 10...g6 11 ♗h6 ♘g7 12 g4 ♔h8 13 ♕e2 ♘f6 14 0-0-0 ♘g8 15 ♗d2 f5 16 gxf5 gxf5 17 exf5 ♗xf5 (or 17...♘xf5 18 ♘e4) 18 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 19 ♘e4 ♕f8 20 ♘h2 and White is better.

10...c6

W



11 ♘xe5

Another plan would have been 11 ♘e2, with the idea of g2-g4 and ♘g3.

11...♘xe5 12 ♕xh5 ♘xc4 13 0-0 ♖e8

Probably this is the correct move, but only if played in conjunction with a subsequent ...♗f8. Speelman was worried about 13...♗f6 14 f4, but after 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 g6 16 ♕e2 cxd5 17 exd5 b5 both sides have chances. Stronger is 14 ♕e2 ♘b6 (but not 14...♗xc3? 15 ♕xc4 ♗f6 16 dxc6 ♗e6 17 ♕d3 and White wins since 17...bxc6 is met by 18 e5) 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 ♕d3 g6 17 ♗h6 ♖e8 18 ♖ad1 d5 19 ♗b3 ♗e6 20 exd5. In this variation neither 20...♘xd5 21 ♕f3 ♗xc3 22 bxc3 ♕h4 23 ♗c1 (or 23 ♗d2), nor 20...cxd5 21 ♕f3 d4 22 ♘e4 ♗g7 23 ♗g5 offer Black much hope.

14 ♖d1

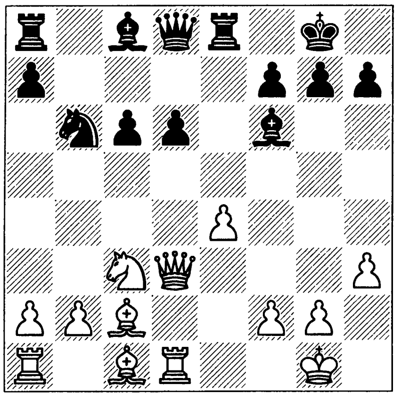
I also considered playing 14 ♗b3, but after 14...♘a5 15 dxc6 ♘xb3 16 cxb7 ♗xb7 17 axb3 ♗f6 Black is okay.

14...♗f6

As I have already indicated, 14...♗f8! was correct. Then 15 ♕e2 ♘b6 16 ♗e3 cxd5 17 ♗xb6 axb6 18 ♘xd5 ♗e6 19 ♗b3 ♖a5 is not so bad for Black, but 19 b4! keeps White's advantage.

15 ♕e2 ♘b6 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 ♕d3

Winning the d6 pawn in view of the threat of 18 e5. 17...♗xc3 18 bxc3 would not have helped Black.



17...g6 18 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 19 ♖xd6 ♗e5 20 ♖d1

20 ♖xc6?! allows Black great activity after 20...♗b7 21 ♖c5 ♗d4 22 ♖g5 ♖ac8.

[AS – Now I realize that instead of 22 ♖g5?, 22 ♖c7 is winning. I should have been greedy.]

20...f5

After 20...♗e6 I would have played 21 ♗b3, since if Black wins his pawn back with 21...♗xb3 22 axb3 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 ♖xe4, White would have a won endgame after 24 c4!

21 ♗b3+ ♗e6

21...♔g7 22 exf5 ♗xf5 23 ♗e3 is hopeless for Black.

22 exf5 gxf5 23 ♗e3 ♘c4 24 ♗xc4 ♗xc4

Black has the two bishops, but no less than four pawn islands as well! White should be able to win comfortably. However ...

25 ♗d4 ♗c7 26 b3 ♗f7 27 ♔f1

With time-trouble approaching, I wanted to protect my back rank.

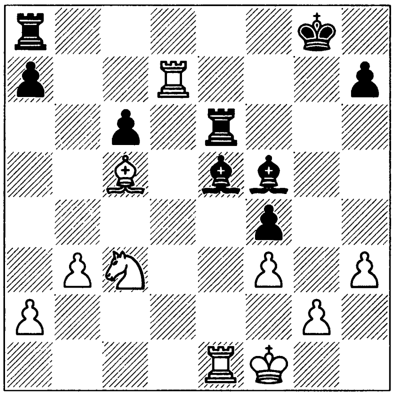
27...f4 28 f3 ♗g6 29 ♖ac1

Threatening 30 ♘d5.

29...♖e7 30 ♗c5 ♖e6 31 ♖d7 ♗e5 32 ♖e1

Now Black gets some counterplay, as would also have been the case after 32 ♖xa7 ♖d8. Much better was 32 ♘e4, which could have been followed by ♖c4, after which the black position is hopeless.

32...♗f5



33 ♘a4

When it rains, it pours! I was worried by 33 ♘e4 ♗c3, but after 34 ♖c1 ♖xe4 35 fxe4 ♗xd7 36 ♖xc3 White should win. The same is true even after the interpolation 34...♗b2 35 ♖c2.

33...♖ee8 34 ♖xa7 ♗d3+

White would be winning after 34...♖ad8 35 ♖e7 ♗d3+ 36 ♔g1, but now 35 ♔g1 fails to 35...♗d4+.

35 ♔f2 ♖ad8 36 ♘b6 ♗f6

36...♗f5 might have caused me serious problems in time-trouble. After 37 ♘c4 ♗f6 38 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 White does not have 39 ♖a8 (as in the game), and 37 ♖e2 ♗d3 38 ♖d2 is precarious: 38...♗f6! 39 ♔g1 ♖e1+ 40 ♔h2 ♗c3! It was necessary to find 37 ♖a8! when Black can choose between 37...♖xa8 38 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 39 ♖xe5 ♖xa2+ 40 ♖e2 ♖a1 (40...♖xe2+ 41 ♔xe2 and the f4 pawn will go) 41 ♖d2 ♗e6 42 ♖d8+ ♔f7 43 ♖f8+ ♔g6 44 b4, winning for White, and 37...♖d2+! 38 ♔g1 ♖xa8 39 ♘xa8 ♗c3! with drawing chances.

37 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 38 ♖a8 ♗d8 39 ♔g1

Not 39 g3? ♔f7.

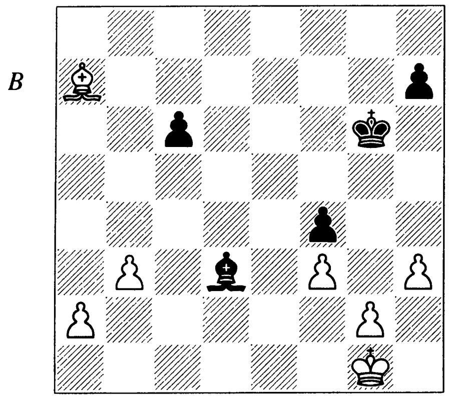
39...♔f7 40 ♖a7+ ♔g6 41 ♗f2

Eliminating any counterplay.

41...♖e1+

The opposite-coloured bishops ending is lost but Black saw no reasonable option.

42 ♗xe1 ♗xb6+ 43 ♗f2 ♗xa7 44 ♗xa7



44...♔f5

If 44...♗b1 then 45 a4 wins: 45...♗c2 46 a5 ♗xb3 47 ♗b8 ♔f5 48 a6 c5 49 a7 ♗d5 50 ♔f2, and White puts his king on c3 and then plays ♗d6, winning.

45 ♗c5 ♗b1 46 a4 ♗c2 47 a5 ♗d3 48 ♗d6 h5 49 h4 ♗a6 50 ♔f2 ♗b5 51 b4 ♗a6 52 g3 fxg3+ 53 ♗xg3 ♔e6 54 ♔e3 ♔d5 55 ♔f4 c5

Or 55...♗e2 56 ♗f2, followed by 57 ♗c5 and 58 ♔g5.

56 bxc5 ♔xc5 57 ♔g5 ♗e2 58 f4 ♔d6 59 f5+ ♔e7 60 f6+ 1-0

Game 29

Shirov – Murshed

Brno 1991

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 52*.

Following the Biel and London tournaments, I was less successful at Brno. I pressed too hard against Stohl and Mokry and lost both games after having refused draws.

As a good consolation, two of my three won games were of a high quality.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 ♘c6 4 ♗e3 e5?!

In this position this move looks somewhat suspicious. More common is 4...♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 d5 ♘e7, although White has also been doing well here recently.

[AS – I should add that the amazing 6...♘a5! with the idea 7 ♕a4+ ♗d7 8 ♕xa5 a6!! has radically altered the assessment of this variation. Theory changes quickly these days!]

5 d5 ♘ce7 6 ♗xc4 ♘g6 7 ♗b5+!?

Trying to refute Black's set-up out of hand. Quieter and stronger would have been 7 ♕b3! ♗d6 (7...♘f6 8 d6! is clearly better for White) 8 ♗b5+ ♔f8 9 ♘e2 ♘8e7 10 ♘bc3, when White is at least slightly better.

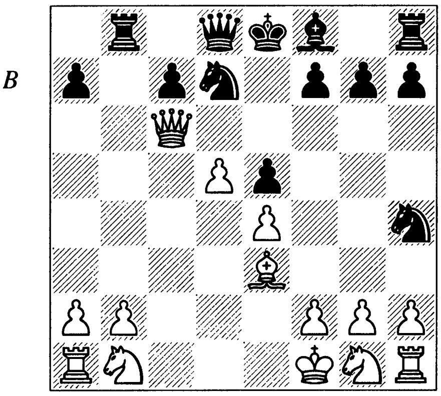
7...♗d7 8 ♕b3 ♘f6!?

I wasn't really expecting this, and had only counted on 8...b6 9 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 10 ♘e2 ♗d6 11 ♘bc3 ♘8e7 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♘b5 with a clear pull for White. It seems that Murshed had prepared the first twelve moves at home, as he played very quickly in the opening.

9 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 10 ♕xb7 ♖b8 11 ♕c6 ♘h4!

Another surprise. After 11...♖xb2 12 ♘f3 ♗b4+ 13 ♘bd2 White would have been clearly better.

12 ♔f1



At this point I was feeling very optimistic. 12...♖xb2 13 g3 ♘g6 14 ♘d2 is clearly in White's favour, so what is the point of Black's play? But ...

12...♗c5!

The next two moves took me nearly an hour, so that from now on I had barely more than half an hour to reach the time control.

13 ♗xc5!

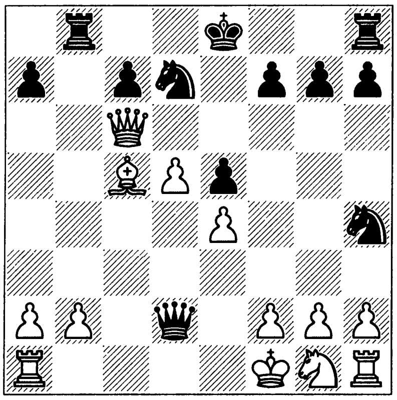
Otherwise White loses, for example 13 g3? ♖b6 14 ♕a4 ♗xe3 15 fxe3 ♖xb2! (but not 15...♕f6+? 16 ♔e2 ♖xb2+ 17 ♘d2 with an unclear position) and Black's attack looks decisive.

13...♕g5 14 ♘d2!

The only move. 14 ♘c3? ♕xg2+ 15 ♔e2 ♕xh1 16 ♕xc7 ♕g2! is bad for White.

14...♕xd2!

W



Now 14...♕xg2+ doesn't work in view of 15 ♔e2 ♖xb2 (15...♕xh1 16 ♘gf3! ♕xa1 17 ♘xe5 ♖d8 18 ♘xf7! wins for White) 16 ♔d3!! ♕xh1 (or 16...♖xd2+ 17 ♔xd2 winning) 17 ♘c4 (the other knight heads for e5 this time!) 17...♖b8 18 ♘xe5 ♖d8 19 ♘xf7 and White wins.

15 ♗a3 ♕d3+ 16 ♘e2 ♘xg2!?

16...♕xe4 17 ♖g1 ♘f5 18 ♕xc7 ♕xd5 19 ♕c2! yields White the advantage. The text looks logical.

17 ♕c3! ♕xc3

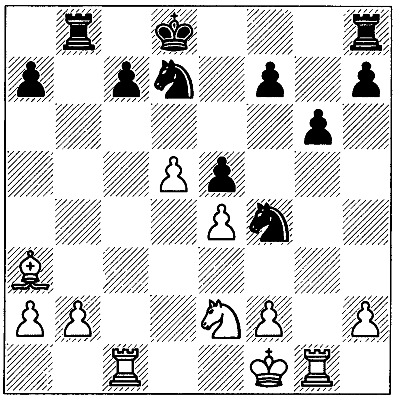
Probably Murshed thought that he would be able to hold the endgame, but it is not so easy. In any case he made the correct decision because the position is very dangerous for Black, for example 17...♕xe4 18 f3 ♕e3 19 ♖c1! ♖b7 (19...♕xc3 20 ♖xc3 ♘h4 21 ♖xc7 ♘xf3 22 ♔f2! ♘d2 23 ♖d1 ♘e4+ 24 ♔e3 is obviously better for White) 20 ♖g1 ♕xc3 21 ♖xc3 ♘h4 22 ♖xg7 ♘g6 23 ♘g3! with a clear advantage. Now 23...♘f6? is met by 24 d6 cxd6 25 ♖xg6!, winning.

18 ♘xc3 ♘f4 19 ♖g1 g6 20 ♘e2! ♔d8

For the time being Black defends well. Much weaker would have been 20...♘d3 21 ♖g3! ♘xb2 22 ♖c1 ♔d8 23 ♖gc3 with a won position.

21 ♖c1

B



21...♘f6?

But this is a mistake. After 21...♘d3 22 ♖c2 f5! 23 exf5 gxf5 White can only claim a slight advantage. Now Black gets into trouble.

22 ♘xf4 exf4 23 d6!

This is stronger than 23 f3 ♘d7, when White only holds a slight edge.

23...♖c8

23...cxd6 24 ♗xd6 ♖xb2? 25 ♗e5 ♖b6 26 ♗c7+ loses immediately, but Black could have tried 23...♖b7 24 f3 ♖e8, though 25 ♖g2 still promises White an edge.

24 f3 ♖e8 25 ♖g5! cxd6

After 25...♖e6 26 ♖gc5! (not 26 ♖a5?! cxd6 27 ♖xc8+ ♔xc8 28 ♖xa7 ♘d7! when Black has some counterplay) 26...♘e8 (forced) 27 dxc7+ ♖xc7 28 ♗b4! White has a clear advantage.

26 ♖xc8+ ♔xc8 27 ♗xd6 ♘h5 28 ♖c5+ ♔d7 29 ♗e5

With a strong bishop against a knight and a queenside pawn majority, White should have enough to win.

29...♖c8

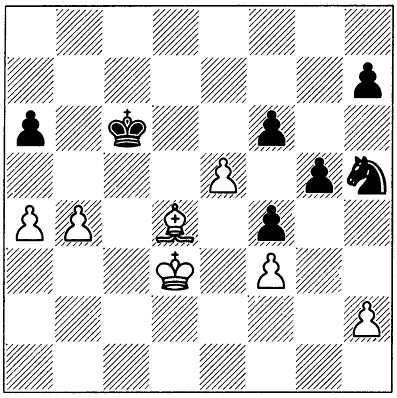
This looks like resignation but the alternative 29...f6 30 ♗d4 would also have been hopeless.

30 ♖xc8 ♔xc8 31 ♔e2 ♔d7 32 ♗d4 a6 33 ♔d3 g5 34 b4 f6 35 a4 ♔c6

35...♘g7 36 ♗xf6 ♘e6 37 ♔c4 would also have been lost for Black, but now White can cut off Black's poorly-placed knight completely.

36 e5!

B



36...fxe5

After 36...f5 37 e6 ♔d6 38 b5 axb5 39 a5 White queens one of his pawns.

37 ♗xe5 ♔d5 38 ♗d4 h6 39 b5 axb5 40 axb5 1-0

Here Black lost on time.

Game 30

Shirov – Zsu. Polgar

Brno 1991

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on notes by Epishin and myself that appeared in *Informator 52*.

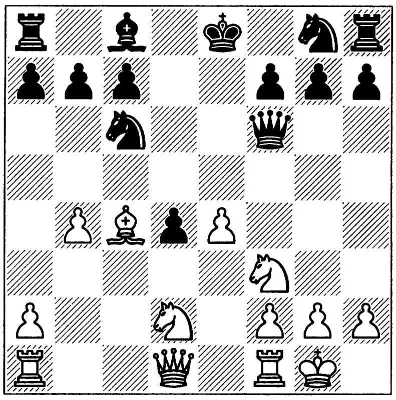
Although it doesn't make me feel especially proud to win using another player's idea, I still decided to include this game in the book because some moves played after the opening stage gave me pleasure.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 e5 4 ♘f3 ♗b4+ 5 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 6 ♘bxd2 exd4 7 ♗xc4 ♘c6 8 0-0 ♕f6

So far the game has followed Epishin-Zsu. Polgar from four rounds earlier, which Black won in convincing style. Afterwards Epishin came up with the new idea of 9 b4 and showed it to me. It didn't take long for his innovation to see the light of day.

9 b4!

B



According to my database this move, although new at the time, has since been played at least half a dozen times in master chess.

9...a6

The logical answer. 9...♘ge7 10 b5 ♘d8 (10...♘e5 11 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 12 f4 ♕d6 13 ♘b3 gives White a slight edge) 11 e5 ♕g6 12 ♘xd4 ♘e6 13 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 14 ♖c1 led to a certain space advantage for White in the game M. Gurevich-Romanishin, Barcelona 1992.

10 e5

White has also successfully employed 10 a4!? (M. Gurevich-Lane, Brussels 1995) and 10 ♖e1!? (B.Lalić-Howell, Isle of Man 1995), but only time will show the objective valuation of those tries.

10...♕g6 11 ♘b3 ♗g4

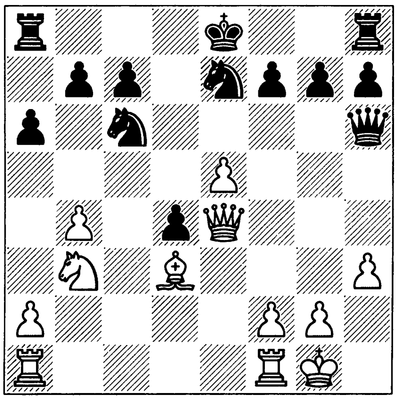
Probably 11...♘ge7 12 ♘bxd4 ♗h3! equalizes rather easily, according to the game Kasparov-Short, Novgorod 1994. I noticed with interest that Epishin avoided 9 b4 in his game against Short in Madrid 1995.

12 ♗d3 ♕h6

Another possibility is 12...♕h5 13 ♗e4! ♘ge7 (or 13...♘xe5 14 ♕e1! ♘e7 15 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 16 ♗xb7 ♕xe1 17 ♖fxe1 ♖b8 18 ♘c5 with a clear advantage for White) 14 h3 ♗f5 (after 14...♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♕xe5 16 ♗xc6+ bxc6 17 ♖e1 ♕d6 18 ♕e2 ♔f8 19 ♖ad1 White is also clearly better) 15 ♗xc6+ ♘xc6 16 ♘fxd4 ♕xd1 17 ♖fxd1 ♗d7 with a slight edge to White in the game Kumaran-Howell, Dublin 1993.

13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♘ge7 15 ♕e4

B



Despite his pawn minus, White can quietly increase his initiative. His pieces are much more active than Black's and he has an excellent pawn structure.

15...♖d8

15...0-0 is no great improvement on the game due to 16 a3 ♕g6 17 f4!, when White stands clearly better, but 15...0-0-0!? is interesting. Still, it seems that White is better after 16 ♘c5 ♖d5 17 ♕g4+ ♔b8 18 ♗e4! ♘xe5 (or 18...f5 19 exf6 ♖g5 20 ♕e6! gxf6 21 f4) 19 ♕g3 ♘5c6 (not 19...♖hd8? 20 ♘xb7! ♔xb7 21 ♕xe5) 20 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 21 a3.

16 a3!

But not 16 ♘c5 ♖d5!, when the position is unclear.

16...♕e6?!

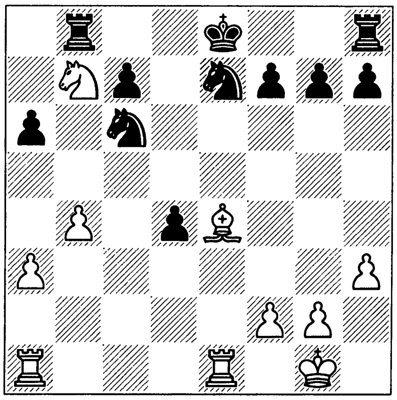
An unfortunate decision in an already difficult position. It would have been better to play 16...♕g6, although after 17 ♘c5! (not 17 f4?! ♕xe4 18 ♗xe4 ♔d7 19 ♘c5+ ♔c8 when matters are not clear at all) 17...♕xe4 18 ♗xe4 b6 19 ♘xa6 ♘xe5 20 ♘xc7+ ♔d7 21 ♘b5 f5 22 ♗c2 d3 23 ♗a4!, with the idea of 23...♔e6 24 f4, White holds the advantage.

17 ♘c5 ♕xe5 18 ♘xb7

Although White is clearly on top in this endgame, I would now prefer 18 ♕h4! b6 (or 18...♕f6 19 ♕xf6 gxf6 20 ♘xb7 ♖b8 21 ♗xa6 with a clear advantage) 19 ♘xa6 ♔f8 20 ♖ac1! with a strong attack.

18...♕xe4 19 ♗xe4 ♖b8 20 ♖fe1!

B



20...0-0

20...♔d7 21 ♘c5+ ♔d6 22 ♘xa6 ♖b6 23 ♘c5 ♘d5 24 ♘b3! is also bad for Black.

21 ♘c5 ♖fc8

The exchange sacrifice 21...a5 22 ♘d7 axb4 fails to 23 ♘xb8 ♖xb8 (23...♘xb8 24 axb4 also wins) 24 ♗xc6! ♘xc6 25 ♖ac1 ♘a7 26 ♖xc7 ♘b5 27 ♖b7! and White wins.

22 ♖ac1

Now White's advantage is decisive.

22...♘a7 23 ♘xa6 ♖b6 24 ♘xc7 g6 25 ♗d3

Keeping things quiet. Another way to win would have been 25 ♘d5 ♘xd5 26 ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 27 ♗xd5 ♘d6 28 ♖d1 ♘b5 29 ♖d3 ♘c3 30 ♗f3 ♖d6 31 ♔f1.

25...♖c6 26 ♖xc6 ♘axc6 27 ♘b5 ♘d5?!

Zsuzsa starts to err in time-trouble and loses quickly, but objectively her position was hopeless in any case.

28 ♖c1 ♘f4?! 29 ♘xd4 ♖d8 30 ♘xc6 ♖xd3 31 ♖a1 ♘e2+ 32 ♔h2 ♘c3 33 a4 1-0

Game 31
Shirov – Nunn
Bundesliga 1991

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 53*.

This was my debut game in my first Bundesliga season. The German Team Championship consists of seven weekends of two games and one of one game every year. A tough routine (the games start at 2 p.m. on Saturdays and 9 a.m. on Sundays) and the importance of the matches demands a high level of concentration.

In my first season (I am now nearly a veteran, having competed for four years) I was especially successful, probably because I felt very relaxed – such was the atmosphere in the Hamburg team.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 ♘e1 ♘d7

At that time 9...♘e8!? was still not very well known. Today it seems to be Black's main weapon (with it, John Nunn gained his revenge against me at Amsterdam 1995).

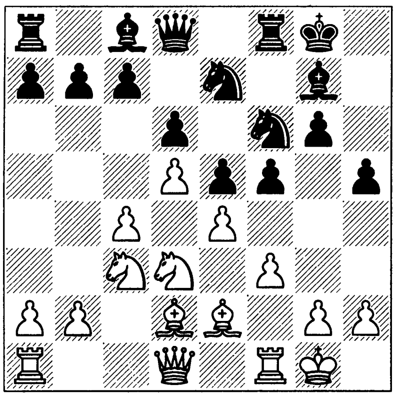
10 ♘d3 f5 11 ♗d2 ♘f6

When I played this variation as Black, I used to employ 11...♔h8 and only after 12 b4, 12...♘f6 13 f3 h5 (see Lutz-Shirov, Santiago 1990 – Game 22 in this book).

12 f3 h5!?

Avoiding the line 12...f4 13 g4.

W



13 exf5

A novelty. After 13 c5 Black would play 13...f4, transposing to well-known variations.

13...gxf5

During the game I expected 13...♘xf5 as the most logical choice. Compared to the aforementioned Lutz-Shirov game, White hasn't yet played b2-b4 and I hoped to exploit this somehow, but now I am not sure whether White has the slightest advantage after 14 ♘f2.

14 f4! e4 15 ♘f2 ♘g4

On 15...h4 I was planning 16 ♘h3 with a possible ♘g5 one day, and I quite like this for White. On my database I found some games in which Black played 15...c6, but I presume that after 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 ♗e3 White stands excellently.

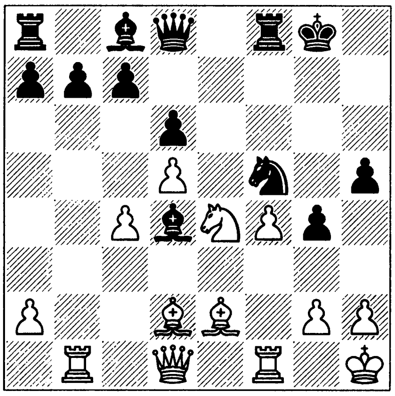
16 ♘xg4 fxg4?

It seems to me that this is a serious mistake. After 16...hxg4 17 ♗e3 White has a pleasant game, but I don't believe that his advantage is anything special, because Black is very solid.

17 ♘xe4 ♗xb2 18 ♖b1! ♗d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♘f5

Black's counterplay on the kingside is in fact not dangerous at all. However, he had little choice as opening the centre would only favour White, for example 19...c5 20 dxc6 bxc6 (20...♘xc6 21 ♖b5!) 21 ♗a5!? ♕xa5 22 ♕xd4 ♘f5 23 ♕d3 with a clear plus. Neither was 19...♗f5 advisable, in view of 20 ♗d3 b6 21 ♕c2 with the idea of 22 ♘g3 or 22 ♘g5.

W



20 ♗d3 b6

Exchanging knight for bishop in the line 20...♘e3 21 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 22 g3 would not overcome Black's strategic difficulties. Another idea for him would have been 20...♗d7, but then White simply answers with 21 ♖e1 (not 21 ♖xb7?! ♗b6 with unclear chances).

21 ♖e1! ♗d7 22 ♘g5 ♖f6

This allows White a very neat opportunity, but what alternative is there? For example, 22...♕f6 23 ♘e6 wins for White, or 22...♖e8 23 ♘e6 ♗xe6 24 ♖xe6! ♖xe6 (24...♘g7 25 ♖h6 also wins) 25 dxe6 ♕f6 26 ♕e2!, intending 27 ♕e4, when White is clearly on top.

23 ♗b4!!

White has discovered the most vulnerable point in Black's position – the bishop on d4 (in the very centre!) which cannot be protected and lacks useful squares. The rest of Black's play is agony, but White had to play precisely to the end.

23...a5

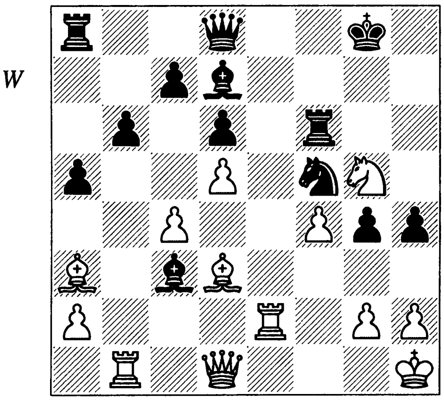
Forced.

24 ♗a3 ♗c3 25 ♖e2

Now the threat is 26 ♖c1 ♗b4 27 ♗b2, occupying the long diagonal and winning the game.

25...h4

A desperate attempt to create tactical counter-chances.



26 ♖e6!

The most powerful way. I rejected the obvious 26 ♖c1 ♘g3+ (the only chance) 27 hxg3 hxg3 28 ♖xc3 because the position after 28...♖xf4! seemed quite unclear to me. Now, after lengthy analysis, I can state that White is still winning after 29 ♗h7+ ♔h8 (29...♔g7 30 ♖e6 or 29...♔f8 30 ♖xg3 ♕xg5 31 ♔g1 ♕h4 32 ♕d3) 30 ♖xg3 ♕xg5 31 ♕b1 ♕h4+ 32 ♔g1 ♕xh7 33 ♗b2+ ♔g8 34 ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 35 ♖e7+ ♔g6 36 ♖xd7 ♖xc4 37 ♖c3 ♖xc3 38 ♗xc3, but why bother with this during the game? 26 ♖e6 is more spectacular after all.

26...♘h6

26...♗xe6 27 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 28 ♕xg4+ ♘g7 29 dxe6 is absolutely hopeless.

27 ♗h7+ ♔g7 28 ♕d3! ♗xe6 29 ♕xc3!

Actually 29 dxe6 ♖xf4! 30 ♕g6+ ♔h8 (or 30...♔f8 31 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 32 ♘f7) 31 ♗g8! (I had overlooked this during the game, seeing only 31 ♕xh6? ♕f8!, when everything is unclear due to the threat 32...♖f1+) 31...♕e7 32 ♗f7! would also win nicely but from an aesthetic point of view I still like the text more.

29...♗g8

29...♗d7 is also met by 30 ♗b2 with the idea of 31 ♘e4.

30 ♗b2! 1-0

The threat of 31 ♗xg8 is irresistible (30...♗xh7 loses to 31 ♘e6+), so Nunn resigned.

Game 32
Shirov – Nikolenko
USSR Championship, Moscow 1991

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes from *Informator 53*.

1 e4

Since 1987 I had played 1 d4 almost exclusively and this game marked my return to 1 e4, which I started playing more and more often from that moment. My opening choice in this game was influenced by the fact that Nikolenko always used to play the same system with Black and I decided to try a new idea of Lanka's.

1...e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 ♘ce2 c5 6 c3 ♘c6 7 f4 b5 8 a3!?

At the time this was a novelty. 8 ♘f3 was more usual.

8...a5?!

Connected with a mistaken plan and ultimately just losing a tempo. 8...b4 9 axb4 cxb4 10 ♘f3 would also slightly favour White, but 8...cxd4 is stronger. I had a hard time as White against Bareyev (Hastings 1991/92) after 9 ♘xd4 (stronger is 9 cxd4 Shirov-Korchnoi, Lucerne 1993) 9...♘xd4 10 ♕xd4?! ♗c5 11 ♕d3 0-0 12 ♘f3 f6!

9 ♘f3 b4

Also possible were 9...c4!? and 9...♖b8!?

10 axb4 cxb4 11 f5!?

This direct attack looked very strong to me, but in retrospect I might prefer 11 g4, not sacrificing anything.

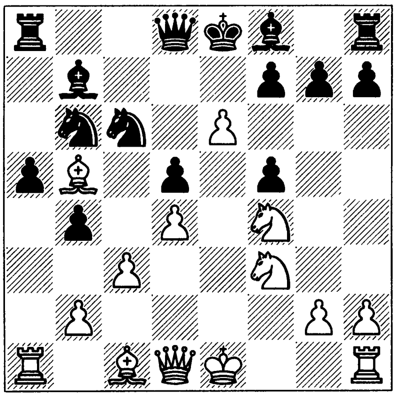
11...exf5 12 ♘f4 ♘b6 13 ♗b5 ♗b7!

A good defence. 13...♕c7? 14 c4 wins; whilst 13...♗d7 14 e6! fxe6 15 ♘xe6 ♕c8 16 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 17 ♘g5! is clearly better for White.

14 e6!

As usual, having sacrificed a pawn one must be very energetic. 14 ♕d3 g6 15 e6 f6! leads to nothing.

B

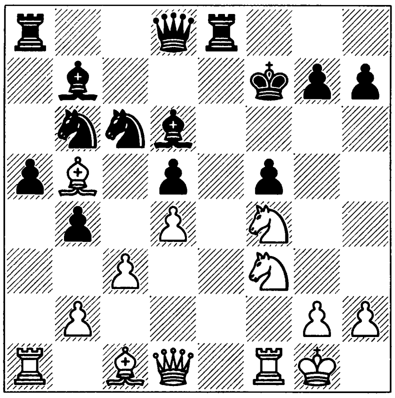


14...♗d6

If now 14...f6?, Black loses by force after 15 ♘e5! fxe5 16 ♕h5+ ♔e7 17 ♕f7+ ♔d6 18 ♕xb7 ♕c7 19 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 20 dxe5+ ♔c5 21 ♕f7!

15 exf7+ ♔xf7 16 0-0 ♖e8!

W



Black has almost developed. What to do and where to go?

17 ♘xd5!

Into the line of fire! This was the title of Mikhail Tal's old book which, indeed, influenced the title of this one. Later I will explain more fully the connection between this game and Tal.

17...♗xh2+!

Nikolenko is also trying to be as active as possible and he doesn't mind sacrificing back. Besides, 17...♘xd5? seems to lose by force to 18 ♘g5+ ♔g6 (or 18...♔g8 19 ♕h5 h6 20 ♕f7+ ♔h8 21 ♕xb7 hxg5 22 ♗xc6 ♖b8 23 ♕f7 ♗xh2+ 24 ♔h1) 19 ♖xf5!! ♔xf5 20 ♗d3+ ♔f6 21 ♕f3+ ♘f4 22 ♗xf4 ♔e7 23 ♗xd6+ ♕xd6 24 ♕f7+ ♔d8 25 ♕xb7, whereas the text keeps tension.

18 ♔xh2 ♕xd5 19 c4!

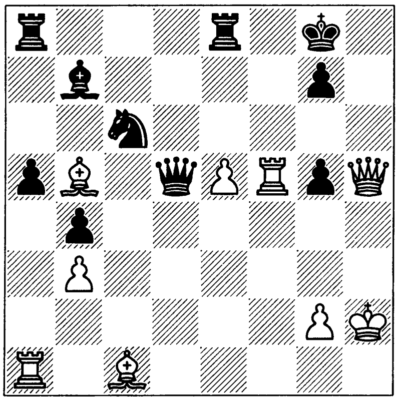
Another pawn sac, this time to get Black's knight misplaced and unprotected. This move demanded very precise calculation.

19...♘xc4 20 ♘g5+ ♔g6

After the game I thought that this was best, but now I see that there would have been nothing wrong with 20...♔g8 and after 21 ♖xf5! not 21...♘6e5? 22 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 23 dxe5 and White just has an extra piece; or 21...♕xf5 22 ♗xc4+ ♔f8 23 ♗d3! ♕d5 (23...♕d7 24 ♕f1+ ♔e7 25 ♗f5 ♕xd4 26 ♗f4! is more or less the same) 24 ♕f1+ ♔e7 25 ♗c4! ♕d6+ 26 ♗f4 ♕h6+ 27 ♔g1, when Black can hardly protect his exposed king. However, Black can play 21...♘4e5!

Now White has to continue 22 ♕h5! h6 23 dxe5 hxg5! (only so, both 23...♘xe5? 24 ♘f3! and 23...♕xb5 24 ♕f7+ ♔h8 25 ♕g6 hxg5 26 ♕h5+ ♔g8 27 ♕f7+ ♔h8 28 ♖xg5 just lose) 24 b3!

B



In my old analysis I considered this position to be winning for White, but in fact Black can hold the draw with 24...♖xe5 (24...♕xb3? loses after 25 ♖xg5 ♕f7 [or 25...♖e7 26 ♕h4!] 26 ♗c4! ♕xc4 27 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 28 ♗h6+ ♔h7 29 ♗g5+ ♔g7 30 ♕h6+ ♔f7 31 ♕f6+ ♔g8 32 ♕g6+ ♔f8 33 ♗h6+ ♔e7 34 ♕d6+) 25 ♗c4 ♕xc4! (not 25...♖xf5 26 ♗xd5+ ♖xd5 27 ♗b2! with a clear advantage for White) 26 ♖xe5! ♕d4! (26...♕xb3? 27 ♖xg5 is clearly better for White) 27 ♖e8+ (27 ♖f5 can be strongly answered by 27...♘e5! [which I missed in 1991] and again the best White can do is to go for a draw after 28 ♖xa5! ♖xa5 29 ♕e8+ ♔h7 30 ♕h5+) 27...♖xe8 28 ♕xe8+ ♔h7, as White has nothing better than 29 ♕h5+ with perpetual check.

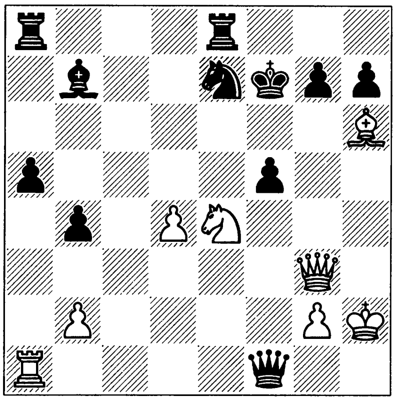
21 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 22 ♕f3! ♖f8?

Finally Black makes a big mistake. It was also bad to play 22...♘xd4? 23 ♕xb7 ♕xf1 24 ♕f7+ ♔h6 25 ♘e6+ with mate to follow, but the alternative knight move, 22...♘e7!, would surprisingly promise Black good chances of resistance:

a) 23 ♕xb7?! ♕xf1 24 ♕b6+ ♔h5 25 ♘e6 ♖a6! 26 ♘xg7+ ♔g4 27 ♕b7 (or 27 ♕c7 ♕f2! 28 ♘xe8 ♕h4+) 27...♕d3! 28 ♘xe8 (28 ♕f3+?! ♕xf3 29 gxf3+ ♔xf3 30 ♘xe8 f4 gives Black excellent compensation for the piece) 28...♕g3+ 29 ♔g1 ♕e1+; so White's best try is

b) 23 ♕g3! ♕xf1 24 ♘e4+ ♔f7 25 ♗h6!

B



White is rook a down and all his pieces are hanging, but I still believed his chances were better until Fritz4 found the really astonishing 25...♕f4!! (otherwise Black is worse since 25...gxh6? 26 ♘d6+ ♔e6 27 ♖xf1 and 25...♕xa1? 26 ♕xg7+ ♔e6 27 ♕e5+ ♔d7 28 ♘f6+ ♔c8 29 ♗f4! lose, whilst 25...♗xe4! 26 ♕xg7+ ♔e6 27 ♖xf1 ♖g8 28 ♕e5+ ♔d7 29 ♖c1!, with the idea of 29...♘c6 30 ♕f6!, yields White a strong initiative) 26 ♗xf4 ♗xe4 27 ♗e5 ♖g8, when the position is about equal.

23 ♕g3!

Now the game is practically over. White's attack crashes through.

23...♕xf1 24 ♘e6+ ♔f7 25 d5 ♖g8

By now there was no defence, for example 25...♔e8 26 ♕xg7 ♖f7 27 ♕g8+ ♔e7 28 ♗g5+ ♔d6 29 ♕xf7 ♕xa1 30 ♕xb7 is curtains.

26 ♕c7+ ♔g6 27 dxc6 ♗c8 28 ♘f4+ ♔f6

If 28...♔g5 then 29 ♕e7+ ♔g4 30 ♘d5 f4 31 ♗xf4 ends the game.

29 ♕d6+ ♔f7 30 ♕d5+ ♔f8 31 ♗e3 1-0

Black resigned as he is mated after 31...♕xa1 32 ♗c5+.

A very complex game which actually coincided with Mikhail Tal's last birthday (he was fifty-five) and he was also playing in the tournament. Shortly before Nikolenko resigned I said to Tal that the game had been my modest present to him. It seemed to me that he was happy with this.

Game 33
Shirov – Kovalev
Bundesliga 1991

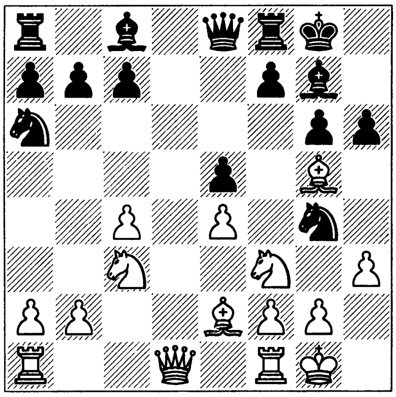
These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 53*.

As I have mentioned, in my first season everything went my way. From these games, I rate this one, with its mutual tension, hard calculation and creativity, the highest.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 0-0 ♘a6 8 ♗e3 ♘g4 9 ♗g5 ♕e8 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 h3 h6

Nowadays 11...♘f6!? is often played, keeping the h6 square open for the bishop and not weakening the kingside pawns.

W



12 ♗c1 ♘f6 13 ♗e3 ♘h5 14 c5!? ♘f4 15 ♗b5! ♕e6 16 ♖e1!

A few months before this game I blundered horribly against Igor Glek (Moscow 1991) with 16 ♕a4??, and after 16...♘xg2 I could have resigned. In spite of a long fight I couldn't save that game.

16...♘xg2!?

Now this is just a dubious though interesting sacrifice. 16...g5 (recommended by Glek) doesn't seem to equalize either, in view of 17 ♗xa6 bxa6 (17...♘xg2? 18 ♔xg2 ♕xh3+ 19 ♔g1 bxa6 20 ♘h2 wins; 17...♕xa6 18 ♗xf4 exf4 19 ♘d5 ♖b8 20 ♘xc7 ♕c6 21 ♕d6! ♗xb2 22 ♖ab1 ♕xd6 [forced] 23 cxd6 ♗g7 24 e5! wins for White) 18 ♗xf4 exf4 19 ♘d5 ♗e5! 20 ♕a4 (intending ♖ad1 and ♕a5) 20...♖b8 21 ♖ad1 ♖xb2?! 22 ♘d4! ♕e8 23 ♕a3, when White is clearly better. After 16...c6 17 ♗xa6 bxa6, Kovalev's suggestion of 18 ♕d6!? is interesting since 18 ♗xf4 exf4 19 ♘d4 ♕c4! looks unclear. It is probably best for Black is to stick with wait and see tactics such as 16...♔h8 or 16...♔h7, both of which were tested in tournament practice after this game.

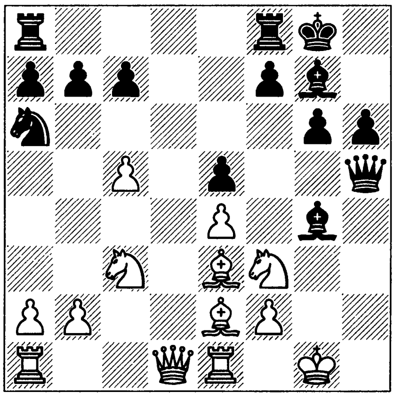
17 ♔xg2 ♕xh3+ 18 ♔g1 ♗g4 19 ♗f1!

It is very important to force Black's queen back a little, since after 19 ♗e2 f5 his initiative could have become very dangerous.

19...♕h5 20 ♗e2!

Just here! After 20 ♗g2? ♔h8, intending ...f7-f5, Black would have a great game. Now White is aiming to exchange some pieces.

B



20...♖ad8

Although objectively this might be the strongest move, it allows White to get the better game without real effort. From the practical point of view 20...f5 was interesting: 21 ♘xe5! (21 ♘h2? simply allows Black to get a third pawn for the piece after 21...♗xe2 22 ♕xe2 ♕xe2 23 ♖xe2 f4)

21...♗xe2 22 ♘xe2 f4! (22...♗xe5 23 ♕d5+ ♔h7 24 ♕xe5 ♖fe8 25 ♕h2 wins for White), and now White has to find the precise variation 23 ♘xf4! (23 ♗xf4 ♖ad8! 24 ♕b3+ ♔h7 is unclear) 23...♕xe5 (23...♕g5+ 24 ♕g4! ♗xe5 25 ♕xg5 hxg5 26 ♘xg6 ♗xb2 27 ♖ab1 ♗c3 28 ♖ec1 is winning for White) 24 ♘xg6 ♕xe4! 25 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 26 ♕h5! (intending ♗h6) 26...♖f6 (26...♖f5 27 ♕h1! is clearly better for White) 27 ♖ad1! ♖g6+ 28 ♔f1 and Black's position is in disarray.

21 ♘d2 f5 22 exf5!

This seems to open files for Black, but in fact White now gets control of the very important e4 point. 22 ♗xg4? fxg4, with the idea of 22...♖f3, is perfectly acceptable for Black.

22...gxf5

Forced.

23 ♗xg4 ♕g6!

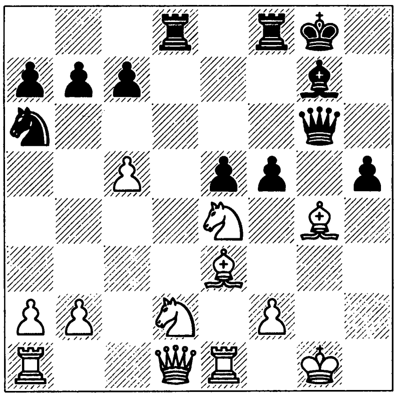
After long thought Kovalev finds a move which greatly complicates White's task. 23...fxg4 24 ♘ce4 would have been a lot easier, for example 24...♖f3 25 ♘g3! ♕h3 (25...♕h4? 26 ♘xf3 wins) 26 ♕b3+ ♔h7 27 ♘de4! (intending 28 ♖ad1, winning) 27...♘xc5 28 ♗xc5! ♖xb3 29 axb3 b6 30 ♗e3 a5 31 ♖ad1 and the game is over because Black's queen is completely useless.

24 ♘ce4!

White has two extra pieces so he should aim to eliminate Black's counterplay. This could not be achieved by 24 ♕b3+? ♔h7 25 ♕xb7 owing to 24...e4!

24...h5!

W



Kovalev does his utmost to keep the fires burning. 24...fxe4 25 ♔h1! would not have given him any serious chances, for example:

a) 25...♖xd2 26 ♗xd2 ♘xc5 (26...♖xf2 27 ♗e3 wins) 27 ♗e3 ♘d3 28 ♖g1! ♘xf2+ 29 ♗xf2 ♖xf2 30 ♕d7!! ♔h8 (30...♔h7 31 ♗f5 wins) 31 ♖af1 with a won position; or

b) 25...♘xc5 26 ♗xc5 ♖xd2 27 ♕xd2 ♕xg4 28 ♖e3! ♖f3 (28...♖f5 29 ♕d8+ ♔h7 30 ♖g3 wins) 29 ♕d5+ ♔h8 30 ♕xe4! and again White is winning.

25 ♗g5!

The decisive move; the rest is a matter of technique. It was not too late to err, e.g. 25 ♘g5? f4! or 25 ♔f1!? hxg4 (forced) 26 ♕b3+ ♕f7 27 ♕xf7+ ♖xf7 28 ♘g5 ♖f6 (intending ...♖g6, ...f5-f4), when in both cases matters would have been far from clear.

25...fxe4

25...♖xd2 loses to 26 ♗xf5! ♕xf5 27 ♕xd2 ♕g4+ 28 ♘g3 h4 29 ♖e4.

26 ♗xd8 ♖xd8

Black cannot create any dangerous threats as he is too short of material, for instance 26...♖f4 27 ♖xe4! or 26...♘xc5 27 ♘xe4! ♖f4 28 ♕d5+! ♔h8 29 ♕xc5 ♖xg4+ 30 ♘g3 and White wins.

27 ♕b3+ ♔h8 28 ♘xe4! ♕xg4+

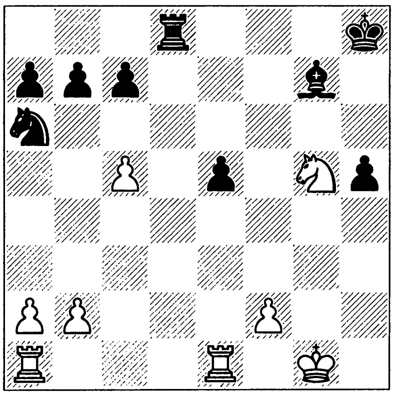
Of course, 28...hxg4 29 ♔g2 is even worse.

29 ♕g3 ♕f5 30 ♕g5!

Finally forcing Black to exchange the queens.

30...♕xg5+ 31 ♘xg5

B



31...♖d4?!

In time-trouble Kovalev makes an active move which in fact makes White's task easier.

His last chance was 31...♖g8 but I still believe that by playing 32 ♔f1! (and not 32 ♘e4?! ♘b4! with counter-chances) 32...♘xc5 33 ♖ad1! White should win, for example 33...♗f6 34 ♘f7+ ♔g7 35 ♘xe5 to meet 35...♖e8 by 36 ♘d7!

32 ♘e6 ♖g4+ 33 ♔f1 ♗f6 34 ♖ad1! ♔h7

If 34...♘b4, 35 ♖d7 wins

35 ♖e3! ♔g6 36 ♖f3!

The clearest way. Now 37 ♖d7 is threatened.

36...e4 37 ♘f8+ ♔f7 38 ♖d7+ ♔xf8 39 ♖xf6+ ♔e8 40 ♖h7

The rooks just do their job.

40...♘xc5 41 ♖xc7 ♘d7 42 ♖h6 1-0

A game brimming with tension, hard calculation and creativity.

Game 34
Bareyev – Shirov
Hastings 1991/92

These annotations were made in January 1992 and first appeared in *Schach*.

Before the tournament I thought that the fight for first place would mainly be between myself and Evgeny Bareyev, as happened at Biel 1991. However, at the time of this game both Bareyev and Simen Agdestein were far ahead while I was on fifty per cent and had lost all hope of first place.

Having won this game I made an attempt to catch the leaders but only finished in third place.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♗d3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 ♗b7 9 0-0 a6

9...b4 10 ♘e4 ♗e7 is currently more popular, but the older text move still has some life left in it.

[AS – Nowadays everybody plays 9...a6 and one has to wonder why 9...b4 is almost forgotten.]

10 e4 c5 11 d5 ♕c7 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 ♕e2

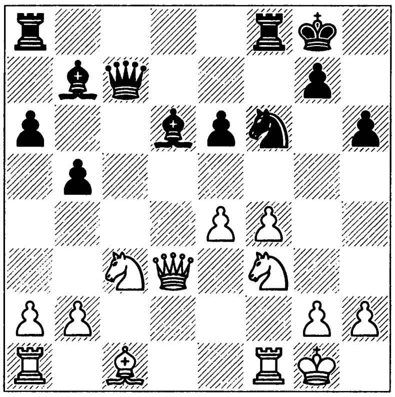
13 ♗c2 c4 14 ♘g5 is considered in Game 55 (Nikolić-Shirov).

13...c4 14 ♗c2 ♗d6 15 ♘g5 ♘c5 16 f4 h6!

Weaker is 16...e5? 17 a4! with a clear advantage for White.

[AS – The game Marin-Shirov, Manila Interzonal 1990, continued (after 16...e5 17 a4) 17...♕b6 (I didn't like 17...b4 18 ♘d5 but this might have been a better choice) 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♖xa8+ ♗xa8 20 ♗e3! (White is winning at this stage) 20...exf4 21 e5! ♗xe5 22 ♗d4?! ♘fe4! 23 ♗f2! f3! 24 ♘xf3 ♗xc3 25 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 26 bxc3 0-0 27 ♕xe4! ♘xe4 28 ♗xb6 ♘xc3 29 ♗a5? ♘e2+ 30 ♔f2 ♘f4! 31 ♖b1 b4! 32 ♗xb4 ♘d3+ 33 ♔e3 ♖b8 34 ♔d4 ½-½.]

17 ♘f3 ♘d3! 18 ♗xd3 cxd3 19 ♕xd3 0-0



With the bishop pair, a lead in development and open central lines, Black has more than adequate compensation for the pawn.

20 ♔h1?

A serious mistake. After 20 e5 ♗c5+ 21 ♔h1 (Sherbakov-Kaidanov, USSR 1988) 21...♘d5 22 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 23 b3 ♖ad8 24 ♕e2 ♕f7! Black has an excellent position, but White is by no means lost.

20...♖ad8!

Stronger than 20...♗xf4 21 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 22 ♘d4 ♕e5 23 ♘f3 or 22...♕g4 23 ♕f3!, when White has chances to save himself.

21 ♘d4

21 ♕e2 ♗xf4 or 21 e5 ♗xe5 22 ♕e2 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 ♗d5! gives Black a big advantage.

21...♗c5 22 ♗e3

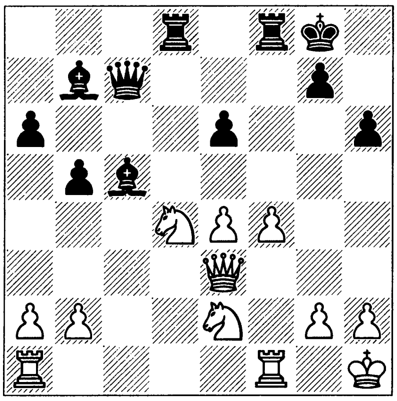
White could go two pawns ahead with 22 ♘xe6 ♖xd3 23 ♘xc7 ♘xe4 24 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 25 ♘xa6, but after 25...♖c8! he would face an irresistible attack.

22...♘g4 23 ♘ce2

No better is 23 ♗g1 ♗xd4 24 ♗xd4 ♖xf4, or 23 ♘d5 ♗xd5 24 exd5 ♖xd5.

23...♘xe3 24 ♕xe3

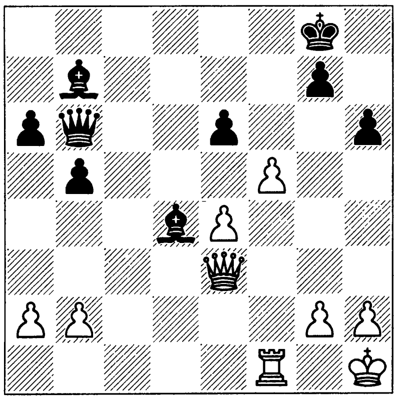
B



24...♖xd4! 25 ♘xd4 ♕b6 26 ♖ad1 ♖d8 27 f5 ♖xd4 28 ♖xd4 ♗xd4

With two bishops for rook and pawn it should be easy for Black. Here, however, White manages to create a few counterchances.

W



29 ♕b3 ♗xe4 30 ♕xe6+

On 30 fxe6 Black wins by 30...♕c6! 31 e7+ ♔h7 32 ♕g3 ♗f6 33 ♖e1 ♗xe7 34 ♕g4 ♗g6, when 35 ♖xe7 is impossible because of 35...♕c1+.

30...♕xe6 31 fxe6 ♗f6!

The most accurate. 31...♗c6 32 ♖c1 ♗e8 33 b4! is not totally clear.

32 ♖e1 ♗g6 33 ♖c1 ♔f8 34 b4 ♗e4!

Only after this move was I sure of winning.

35 ♖c8+ ♔e7 36 ♖c7+ ♔xe6 37 ♖a7 ♗c2

A last finesse.

38 ♖xa6+ ♔d5 39 ♖a7 ♗e5 40 ♖a8 ♗c3 41 ♖c8 ♔d4 42 ♖c7 ♔d3 43 h4 ♗a4 44 g4 ♗f6!? 45 h5

45 g5 hxg5 46 hxg5 ♗xg5 47 ♖xg7 ♗d2 48 ♖g3+ ♔c2 49 ♖g2 ♔c3 50 ♖g4 ♗c1 51 ♔g2 ♗a3 change nothing.

45...♔e4 0-1

Further resistance is pointless as the g4 pawn is lost, for example 46 ♔g2 ♔f4 47 ♔h3 ♗d1.

[AS – It was very unusual for me that I spent just one hour and twenty-five minutes during this game.]

Game 35
Shirov – Smejkal
Bundesliga 1991/92

These annotations were made in May 1992 and first appeared in *Schach*.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗b5+!?

'I have never even analysed this move,' was the first thing my opponent said after the game. Over the board, it is difficult to find one's way through the subtleties of what amounts to a whole new variation.

[AS – The popularity of 7 ♗b5+ began just around 1991-1992 and it was still relatively unknown at the time of this game. Recently, when checking recent developments, I found five hundred games on my database with it!]

7...c6 8 ♗a4 0-0 9 ♘e2 e5!?

An objectively strong but committal continuation. 9...c5 leads to quieter play.

10 0-0 ♘d7

A new move. 10...exd4 11 cxd4 c5 12 ♗a3 b6 13 ♖c1 does not look particularly good for Black.

[AS – That sequence occurred in the game Shirov-M. Rychagov, Tallinn (rapid) 1991. 10...♕e7 deserved serious attention, as Black was not prepared for the ensuing complications; whilst 10...♖e8 is the latest fashion here.]

11 ♗a3!? ♖e8 12 ♗b3

During the game I assumed that I had set up the strong threat of 13 ♗xf7+, but now, after many days of analysis, I have to say that it was all bluff.

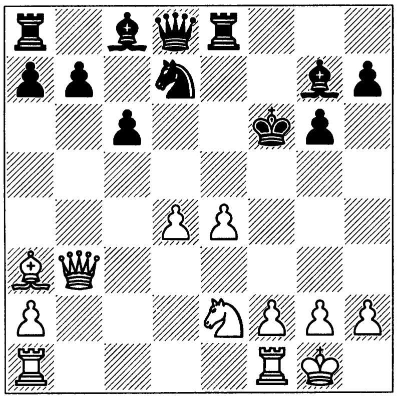
12...♘b6?!

The fearless 12...exd4! should have been played. White's intended

13 ♗xf7+? ♔xf7 14 ♕b3+ is then refuted not by 14...♖e6? 15 f4 ♕b6 16 f5 dxc3+ 17 ♔h1! ♕xb3 18 fxe6+ ♔xe6 19 axb3 and White is better, but by 14...♔f6! 15 cxd4

[AS – The move 15 f4, which I believed to be stronger in 1992, just fails to 15...♖xe4 16 ♘g3 ♖e3 17 ♖ad1 d3 18 f5 ♘e5 and White's attack is over as well as the game]

W



Now, after 15 cxd4, Black must not play

a) 15...♗f8?, because after 16 ♕g8 ♗xa3 17 e5+ he loses in both

a1) 17...♔e7 18 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 19 ♘f4 ♘xe5 20 dxe5 ♗f5 21 ♖ad1 ♕g5 22 ♖d7 ♗e7 (22...♗xd7 23 ♘xg6+ ♕xg6 24 ♕xg6) 23 g3 ♕xf4 24 ♕h8+ ♔f7 25 ♕f6+ ♔g8 26 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 27 gxf4; and

a2) 17...♘xe5 18 dxe5+ ♔xe5 (18...♔g5 19 ♕xh7 ♗c5 20 h4+ ♔f5 21 ♘g3+ ♔xe5 22 ♕xg6) 19 ♕g7+ ♔e6 (19...♕f6 20 f4+ wins) 20 ♘d4+ ♔d5 21 ♖ad1. Therefore the right move is

b) 15...♗h6!, when White's compensation for his material losses is clearly insufficient, for example 16 d5 ♔g7 17 dxc6 bxc6 18 ♖ad1 ♗g5!, with the idea of meeting 19 f4 with 19...♕b6+ 20 ♕xb6 axb6 21 ♗b2+ ♗f6 is clearly better for Black.

The immediate sacrifice is therefore incorrect, and 13 cxd4 ♖xe4 14 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 15 ♕b3+ ♖e6 16 ♘f4 ♘b6 17 ♖fe1 ♘d5 18 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 19 ♕xb7+ (19 ♖xe6 ♔xe6 20 ♕xb7 ♔f6! is clearly better for Black) 19...♗d7 likewise favours Black.

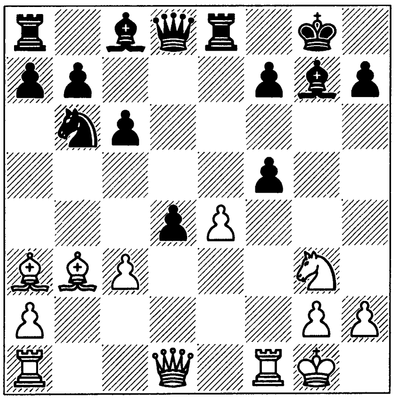
Although it is very likely that I would have sacrificed the bishop, objectively White should prefer 13 ♘xd4. However, even here Black's chances are no worse after 13...♘f6 14 f3 ♕c7.

13 f4!

The logical continuation. On 13 ♕d3 Smejkal was intending 13...a5! (13...♗e6 14 f4 exd4 15 cxd4 ♗xb3 16 axb3 is slightly better for White), which leads after 14 ♖ad1 a4 15 ♗c2 ♗e6 16 ♗b1 ♘c4 17 ♗c1 to an unclear position.

13...exd4 14 f5 gxf5 15 ♘g3!

B



15...dxc3?

Now White's attack crashes through. 15...♗e6 also fails to solve the problems on account of 16 ♘xf5 (but not 16 ♗xe6? ♖xe6 17 exf5 ♖h6! 18 ♗c1 dxc3! when

Black is clearly better) 16...♗xf5 17 ♖xf5 White's attack is very powerful, for example:

a) 17...♖xe4 18 ♖xf7 ♔h8 19 ♕f3! ♕h4 20 ♖f1 and either

a1) 20...♖e3 21 ♕f5 ♖e5 22 ♗f8!! ♖xf5 23 ♗xg7+ ♔g8 24 ♖1xf5 ♘d5 25 ♗xd4 ♕h6 (25...♕g4 26 ♖xd5! cxd5 27 ♗xd5 wins for White) 26 ♖7f6 ♕c1+ 27 ♖f1 followed by ♖6f3-g3; or

a2) 20...♖e1 21 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 22 ♕f7+ ♔h8 23 ♗c5!! dxc3 24 ♗f2 ♖xf1+ 25 ♔xf1 ♕g4 26 ♕f6+ ♕g7 27 ♗d4 is just crushing. The only chance for Black is

b) 17...♔h8, but still after 18 ♕g4! dxc3 19 ♖d1 ♕c8 20 ♗xf7 ♖d8 21 ♖df1 he should feel sad.

However, Black had the strong move 15...♕h4! at his disposal. During the game I could not see a fully satisfactory reply to this, but later I found that 16 cxd4 (16 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 17 ♖xf5 ♕xe4 is unclear) 16...♗e6 17 e5! (17 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 18 ♖xf5 ♕xe4 is again not promising for White) 17...f4 (17...♖ad8 18 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 19 ♖xf5 ♖xd4 20 ♕f3! is clearly better for White; while after 17...♘d5 18 ♗xd5 cxd5 19 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 20 ♖xf5 White is only slightly better) 18 ♘h5 ♗xb3 19 axb3 ♘d5 20 ♗c1! maintains a small advantage. Then 20...f3?! 21 ♕xf3 ♕xd4+ 22 ♖f2! ♗xe5 23 ♗b2 ♕xb2 24 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 25 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 26 ♖f1 is clearly unfavourable for Black.

[AS – This old analysis is definitely wrong. I missed a much stronger move instead of 16...♗e6, i.e. 16...f4! and I don't see how White can even equalize, since after 17 ♘h5 ♖xe4! (17...♗g4 18 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 19 ♘xg7 ♗xd1 20 ♘xe8 is rather unclear according to the game Přibyl-Smejkal, Pardubice open 1992) 18 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 White's compensation for the two sacrificed pawns seems inadequate. However, 15...♕h4 can be strongly answered by 16 ♖xf5! ♗xf5 17 ♘xf5 (Züger-Van Mil, Mitropa Cup 1993) and White's attack is worth the exchange.]

16 ♕h5 ♘c4?!

After using six of his remaining ten minutes, Smejkal rejected the obvious 16...♗e6 because of 17 ♘xf5 ♗xb3 18 ♕g4 ♕f6 19 ♘e7+ ♕xe7 20 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 21 axb3. But it is precisely here that 21...♖ae8! gives Black good chances of saving himself. However, 18 axb3! is stronger than 18 ♕g4, for example 18...♖e5 (if 18...♕f6 then 19 ♖f4! ♕g6 20 ♕h3! h5 21 ♖af1 with a decisive attack) 19 ♖ad1! ♕e8 20 ♕g4 ♖xf5 21 ♖xf5 and White has a clear advantage. I might also mention that 16...♕f6 17 ♘xf5 yields White a strong attack as well.

17 ♖ad1 ♕b6+ 18 ♔h1 ♕b5

The alternatives 18...♗e6 19 exf5 ♘xa3 (or 19...♗d5 20 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 21 f6 winning) 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 ♖d7 ♖f8 22 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 23 ♕e5+ and 18...♕a6 19 exf5! ♕xa3 20 ♗xc4 ♕e7 (or 20...♕f8 21 f6 ♗h6 22 ♖d4) 21 ♖de1! ♕xe1 22 f6! do not alter the result.

19 ♘xf5 ♗xf5

On 19...♗e6 the simplest is 20 ♗xc4! ♕xc4 (or 20...♗xc4 21 ♕g5! ♕e5 22 ♗d6 ♕f6 23 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 24 ♖xf6) 21 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♕g5+ ♔h8 23 ♗d6 and White wins.

20 ♖xf5 ♘e5 21 ♗xf7+ ♘xf7 22 ♕xf7+ 1-0

Another memorable game from my first Bundesliga season, although its quality is not especially high. Still, White's attack flew like an arrow.

Game 36

Shirov – Thorhallsson

Reykjavik 1992

These annotations were made in March 1992 and first appeared in *Schach*.

This game introduces a novelty which should probably be called the 'Shabalov-Shirov Gambit', as suggested once by Mikhail Krasenkov. As I remember, 'Shaba' expressed the idea first, although it occurred to us almost simultaneously while we were listening to pop music and lazily moving the pieces around.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♕c2 ♗d6 7 g4!

An idea of Alexander Shabalov's. Only time will give an objective answer to the assessment of this move. It is clear, though, that the it leads to completely different types of position to the traditional lines of the Meran.

[AS – The theory of 7 g4 has developed a great deal since 1992, but there is still room for investigation.]

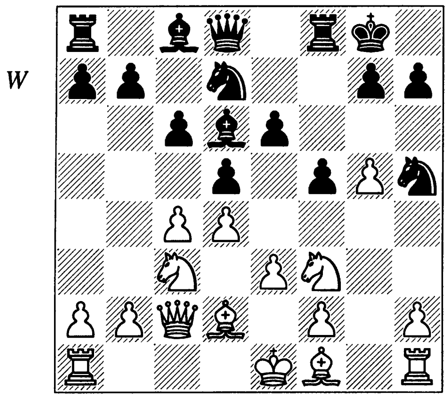
7...0-0

After this White obtains a strong initiative without making any material concessions. 7...♘xg4 8 ♖g1 is critical, and 7...h6 should also be considered.

[AS – Two weeks later, in Oakham, Akopian played 7...♘xg4 against me and lost. Then in Dortmund (April 1992) Kasparov came up (after thinking for about twenty minutes) with 7...dxc4!? against Adams and won quickly. Kasparov said that chess is an interesting game if moves like 7 g4 are possible!]

8 g5 ♘h5 9 ♗d2 f5!?

On 9...a6 (intending ...b7-b5) White forces the play with 10 c5 ♗c7 11 ♘e2! followed by 12 ♘g3.



10 gxf6 ♘hxf6 11 ♘g5 ♕e8 12 0-0-0

On the alternative 12 f4!? I was afraid of 12...e5! 13 fxe5 ♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♕xe5 15 ♘f3 ♕h5 with a strong attack for Black. 13 0-0-0 e4 is better but I didn't like this either.

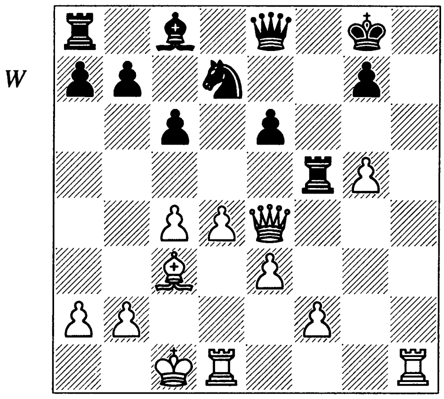
12...h6 13 h4 ♗b4!

As the immediate 13...hxg5 14 hxg5 ♘e4 15 ♘xe4 dxe4 16 ♕xe4 ♖f5 17 c5 followed by 18 ♗c4 is fatal for Black, the knight on c3 must be eliminated before capturing on g5. However, the strong text move cost my opponent too much time on the clock. He now had only half an hour left for the remaining 27 moves to the time control.

14 ♗d3 ♗xc3

Again the best decision. During the game I was afraid of 14...b6, but White obtains a big advantage with 15 cxd5!, for example 15...cxd5 16 ♘b5 ♗xd2+ 17 ♖xd2, or 15...exd5 16 ♗h7+ ♔h8 17 ♘e2! ♗d6 (or 17...♗xd2+ 18 ♖xd2 and 19 ♘f4) 18 ♕xc6, or finally 15...♗xc3 16 ♗xc3 exd5 17 ♗h7+ ♔h8 18 ♗f5.

15 ♗xc3 hxg5 16 hxg5 ♘e4 17 ♗xe4 dxe4 18 ♕xe4 ♖f5



With two pawns for the piece and good play against the black king, White holds all the trumps.

19 ♕h4

After 19 g6 ♕xg6 20 ♖dg1 ♕f6 Black holds on for the time being.

19...♕g6 20 ♕h8+!

The point of this simple check becomes clear two moves later. The immediate 20 f4 is met by 20...♖f8.

20...♔f7 21 f4 ♘f8

Otherwise White plays 22 ♕d8 and 23 ♖h8 with a decisive attack.

22 ♕h4!

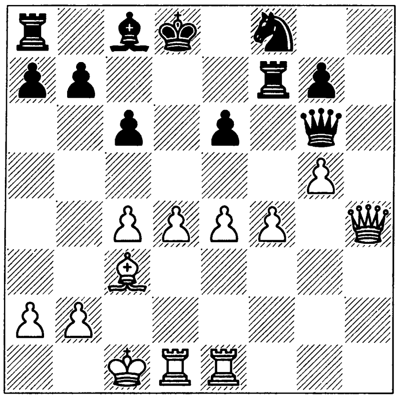
Intending to trap the rook after 23 e4.

22...♔e8 23 e4 ♖f7 24 ♖he1!

Now Black has problems with his queen. 25 f5 is threatened.

24...♔d8

W



25 d5!

Unleashing the second wave of the attack on the black king. Despite serious time-trouble my opponent defends himself very ingeniously for a while.

25...cxd5 26 cxd5 ♗d7

If 26...exd5 then 27 ♖xd5+ ♗d7 28 f5 winning.

27 f5! exf5 28 e5 f4!?

This gives White more practical problems than 28...♖c8 29 e6 ♖e7 30 ♕b4! b6 31 ♕d6! ♕xg5+ 32 ♔b1, when the threat of 33 ♗b4 ♘g6 34 ♖c1 is irresistible.

29 e6 ♗a4! 30 ♖d2 ♖f5 31 ♕f2!

31 e7+? ♔d7 is unclear.

31...f3!? 32 ♖e4?!

Complicating matters. Correct was 32 ♕c5! ♔e8 (32...f2 33 e7+ ♔d7 34 exf8♘+! ♖axf8 35 ♖e7+ ♔d8 36 ♕c7 mate) 33 ♕b4! b5 34 ♕c5, winning.

32...♖xg5 33 ♖xa4 ♖g1+ 34 ♖d1 ♖g2?

Now White wins easily. Black should have tried 34...♕h6+! 35 ♕d2 f2 (not 35...♖xd1+ 36 ♔xd1 ♕h1+ 37 ♔c2), although White is still winning after 36 ♖f4! ♖xd1+ 37 ♔xd1 ♕h1+ 38 ♔e2 ♘g6 39 ♖xf2 ♕e4+ (or 39...♕h5+ 40 ♔e1 ♕h1+ 41 ♖f1 ♕e4+ 42 ♕e2 ♕xd5 43 ♕g4!) 40 ♔d1! (40 ♕e3?! ♕xd5) 40...♕b1+ 41 ♕c1 ♕d3+ 42 ♖d2 ♕f3+ 43 ♔c2 ♕e4+ 44 ♔b3.

35 ♕h4+ ♔e8 36 ♖e4!

The clearest way. Now in a time-scramble Black gets checkmated.

36...♖c8 37 d6 ♖d8? 38 ♕e7 mate

Game 37

Shirov – Plaskett

Reykjavik 1992

1 d4 e6 2 e4

It's strange that I chose this move since at that time I didn't employ 1 e4 openings very much. Perhaps the reason was that I was not very familiar with Plaskett's pet line 1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6.

2...d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♕a5

Normally 6...♘e7 is played here.

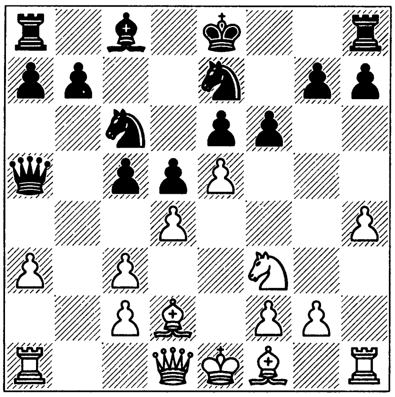
7 ♗d2 ♘e7 8 ♘f3

Possibly I should have tried 8 ♕g4 in order to exploit the early advance of the black queen.

8...♘bc6 9 h4!? f6!

An interesting reaction to White's pawn advance. Since he is well developed Black immediately tries to open the centre. Afterwards I was so impressed by this move that I thought that Black was already almost better. Of course, this is an exaggeration. 9...♕a4 10 ♕b1 c4 11 h5 h6 was what I had expected and 9...♗d7 had been played before.

W



10 exf6

I didn't like the position after 10 c4 ♕a4 11 cxd5 exd5 12 exf6 gxf6, with good reason.

10...gxf6 11 ♘h2!?

Trying to refute Black's idea. Another possibility was 11 a4 ♕c7 12 g3.

11...♕a4!

11...e5? 12 c4 is clearly better for White.

12 ♖b1?

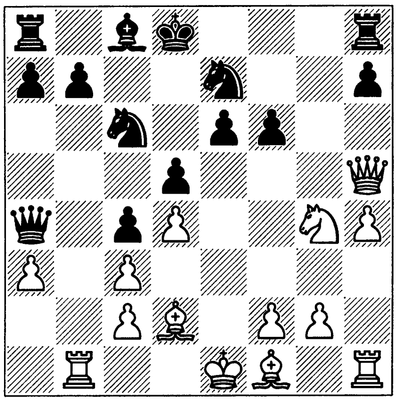
A very weak move which gets White into severe trouble. Instead he should have played 12 ♗d3 with good attacking prospects.

12...c4!

Very strong. I had only counted on 12...a6 13 ♗d3! c4 (13...cxd4 14 ♕h5+ ♔d8 15 ♕f7 and 13...h5 14 ♕f3 are clearly better for White) 14 ♕h5+ ♔d8 15 ♗xh7 ♕xc2 (15...♕xa3 16 ♕f7!) 16 ♗xc2 ♖xh5 17 ♘f3 with a clear advantage or 12...cxd4 13 ♗b5 ♕xa3 14 cxd4 ♕d6 15 ♕h5+ ♔d8 16 ♘f3 with good compensation.

13 ♕h5+ ♔d8 14 ♘g4

B



14...e5?

I don't really understand why Plaskett played this move. The simple 14...♕xc2! was called for, when White must continue 15 ♖c1 ♕e4+ 16 ♗e3 (even worse is 16 ♗e2?! ♕xg2 17 ♖h2 ♕e4 18 ♘xf6 ♕f5 with an advantage for Black) and now Black should play not 16...♘g8?! 17 ♕f7! ♕xg4 18 ♕f8+ ♔d7 (18...♔c7 19 ♗e2 ♕xg2 20 ♔d2! is clearly better for White) 19 h5!!, when the position is extremely unclear, for example 19...♘ce7 (or even 19...b6 20 h6 ♗b7 21 ♕g7+ ♕xg7 22 hxg7 ♘ge7 23 gxh8♕ ♖xh8) 20 ♗e2 ♕xg2 21 ♔d2; but 16...♕f5! 17 ♕xf5 ♘xf5 18 ♘xf6 ♘xe3 19 fxe3 ♔e7 20 ♘g4 b5 with a slight endgame advantage (20...h5 21 ♘h2 e5 is also a shade better for Black).

15 ♘xf6 exd4

Now 15...♕xc2 can be met by 16 ♖c1 ♕f5 17 ♕xf5 ♗xf5 18 dxe5 ♘xe5 19 ♗h6!, when White is clearly better.

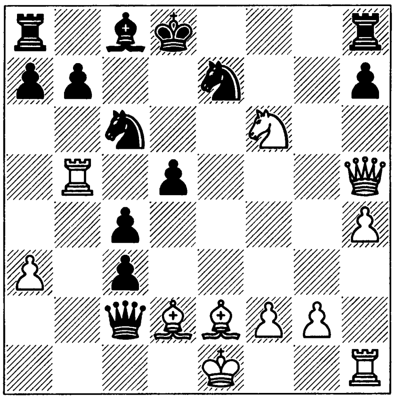
16 ♗e2 ♕xc2

16...dxc3? is quite bad in view of 17 ♗g5 ♕xc2 18 0-0 with a tremendous attack.

17 ♖b5 dxc3?

After this Black gets mated virtually by force, but White's attack was already very strong. Here are some sample variations: 17...♗e6 18 ♗g4! dxc3 19 ♗g5! a6 (or 19...♘d4 20 ♗xe6! ♘xb5 21 0-0 ♕g6 22 ♕xg6 ♘xg6 23 ♘xd5+ ♔e8 24 ♖e1) 20 ♖xb7! (20 ♖xd5+!? ♗xd5 21 0-0 ♕g6 22 ♕xg6 hxg6 23 ♘xd5 is also promising) 20...♔c8 21 ♖xe7! ♕b1+ 22 ♗d1 ♘xe7 23 0-0 h6 24 ♕e2 ♕b6 25 ♗e3 ♕c6 26 ♗d4 ♘f5 (26...♘g6 27 ♖e1 is clearly better for White) 27 ♗xc3 and the threat of 28 ♗a4 is very unpleasant. Of course this is just a brief analysis of the position after 17 ♖b5 but it illustrates Black's difficulties. Still, there was no reason for 17...dxc3.

W



18 ♖xd5+ ♘xd5 19 ♕xd5+

The queen is too strong for the exposed king.

19...♔e7

19...♔c7 would have come to the same after 20 ♗f4+ ♔b6 21 ♗e3+ ♔c7 22 ♕f7+ ♔d8 (or 22...♔d6 23 ♗f4+ ♘e5 24 ♕d5+) 23 ♘d5! ♕b1+ 24 ♗d1 ♗d7 25 ♕f6+.

20 ♕c5+ ♔xf6 21 ♕g5+! ♔f7 22 ♗h5+ ♔e6 23 ♗g4+ ♔f7

Or 23...♔d6 24 ♗f4+.

24 ♕d5+ ♔e7

Also fatal for Black are 24...♔g7 25 ♗h6+! ♔g6 26 ♗h5+ ♔f6 27 ♗g5+ ♔g7 28 ♕f7 mate and 24...♔f8 25 ♗h6+ ♔e7 26 ♗g5+.

25 ♗g5+ ♔f8 26 ♕d6+ ♔g8

26...♔f7 27 ♕f6+.

27 ♗e6+ ♔g7 28 ♕c7+ 1-0

Game 38

Tiviakov – Shirov

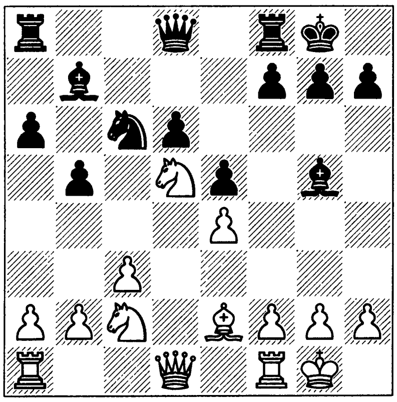
Oakham 1992

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 54*.

Sergei Tiviakov is of the same generation of ex-Soviet players as me, and it is no wonder that I have played so many games against him. Interestingly enough we often employed the same openings against each other with either colour (such as the Dragon or the Sveshnikov).

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♗g5 a6 8 ♘a3 b5 9 ♘d5 ♗e7 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 c3 0-0 12 ♘c2 ♗b7 13 ♗e2 ♗g5 14 0-0

White goes for a simple and unpretentious development. The critical line was 14 a4 bxa4 15 ♖xa4, since in some variations White can save an important tempo on castling.



14...♘b8! 15 ♕d3

15 a4 bxa4 16 ♖xa4 ♘d7 yields Black very comfortable development, for example 17 b4 ♘b6 with a slight advantage for Black.

15...♘d7 16 ♖fd1 ♘c5 17 ♕f3 g6 18 ♘ce3

For the moment White prevents the advance 19...f5 but Black doesn't give up on this idea.

18...♔h8

I had calculated the immediate 18...f5? and soon concluded that after 19 exf5 gxf5 20 ♘xf5 e4? 21 ♘de7+! (but not 21 ♕g4? ♖xf5! 22 ♕xf5 ♗c8 23 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 24 ♕d5+ ♗e6 25 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 26 ♖xd6 ♔f7, when Black is clearly better) 21...♗xe7 22 ♕g4+ ♔f7 (22...♗g5 23 ♖xd6 also wins for White) 23 ♕g7+ ♔e8 (or 23...♔e6 24 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 25 ♗g4+) 24 ♗h5+ ♔d7 25 ♖xd6+ White wins.

19 ♗f1 ♖a7!?

This funny move contains a clever trap. If White now makes a simple move like 20 g3 there follows 20...f5!! 21 exf5 gxf5 22 ♘xf5 e4 23 ♕g4 ♖xf5! 24 ♕xf5 ♗c8 and Black wins the queen, since the rook on a7 controls the f7 square! 19...f5 here was still not good because of 20 exf5 gxf5 21 ♘xf5 ♗c8 22 g4 with a slight advantage for White.

20 b4

White avoids the trap but it is amusing that the rook on a7 will come to the fore one day.

20...♘e6?!

After the game my opponent was severely critical of this move, claiming that 20...♘a4!, with the idea of 21 c4 ♘b2, would have been much stronger. Further analysis has convinced me that from a practical point of view he was right, as White has many options but none of them really work, for example:

a) 22 ♖d2 ♘xc4 23 ♘xc4 bxc4 24 ♖dd1 ♗xd5 25 ♖xd5 ♖c7 is clearly better for Black;

b) 22 ♖dc1 f5! 23 cxb5 fxe4 24 ♕xe4 axb5 25 ♗xb5 ♗xd5 26 ♕xd5 ♖af7 and again Black is clearly on top;

c) 22 ♖db1 ♘xc4 and now:

c1) 23 ♘xc4 ♗xd5 24 ♘xd6!? (or 24 exd5 bxc4 25 ♗xc4 e4!) 24...♕xd6 25 ♖d1 is again better for Black;

c2) 23 ♗xc4 bxc4 24 ♘xc4 ♗xd5 25 exd5 e4! 26 ♕xe4 ♗f6 27 ♘b2 ♖e8 and again Black stands better.

In these variations White may have drawing chances but it's very unpleasant for him. However it seems that there is a way for him to get acceptable play, namely:

d) 22 ♖e1! and I don't see anything better for Black than 22...♘xc4 23 ♗xc4 bxc4 24 ♘xc4 ♗xd5 25 exd5 f5 26 ♘a5 e4 with a very unclear game similar to the text.

21 a4

Now White easily develops his queenside play and Black can only rely on a counterattack. The real war starts.

21...bxa4 22 ♖xa4 f5 23 ♖a5!?

Although Black has as yet no direct threats, it is not easy to improve White's position. The straightforward 23 ♖da1 would have been met by 23...♗f4! 24 exf5 gxf5, with another devilish trap – if White now takes a pawn with 25 ♗xa6? there follows 25...♖xa6! 26 ♖xa6 ♗xe3 27 fxe3 ♘g5 28 ♕d1 (28 ♕e2 ♗xd5 is also unattractive for White, for example 29 ♕d3 ♘h3+ 30 gxh3 ♖g8+ 31 ♔f1 ♗e4 32 ♕xd6 ♗d3+ and Black wins) 28...♘h3+!!, leaving White with an unpleasant choice between:

a) 29 gxh3 ♖g8+ and now:

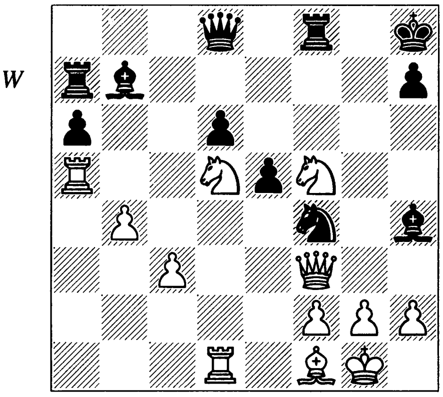
a1) 30 ♔h1? ♕g5 31 ♕f3 (or 31 ♖6a2 ♕xe3 32 ♖g2 ♕e4) 31...♕xe3!! and Black wins;

a2) 30 ♔f1 ♕g5! and Black's attack is decisive; or

b) 29 ♔f1 ♕h4 30 gxh3 (not 30 ♖6a2 ♗a6+! or 30 ♕d2 ♗xd5) 30...♕c4+ (but not 30...♖g8? which was mentioned in my old annotations but fails to 31 ♘f4! according to Fritz4) 31 ♕e2 ♗xa6 32 ♖xa6 ♕xd5 and White's position seems to be in ruins.

Another logical try for White would have been 23 ♗c4!?, when again nothing is clear.

23...♗h4! 24 exf5 gxf5 25 ♘xf5 ♘f4



26 ♘xh4

Until I started working on this game again I was sure that this was the decisive mistake, but now I see that White is not lost even after this move. His other option was 26 ♕e3!? ♖xf5 27 ♕xa7 ♘h3+! (after 27...♗xd5? 28 g3! Black's initiative dies and his position becomes difficult) 28 gxh3 ♕g8+! (not 28...♗xf2+? 29 ♕xf2 ♖xf2 30 ♔xf2 and White wins) 29 ♗g2 (29 ♔h1? ♗xf2) 29...♖g5 30 ♕xb7 ♖xg2+ 31 ♔h1 ♗xf2 32 ♕b8! (both sides are obliged to sacrifice!) 32...♕xb8 33 ♔xg2 ♗h4 and although I slightly prefer Black in this position, I believe that White should be able to hold the draw.

26...♘xd5! 27 ♕h5?

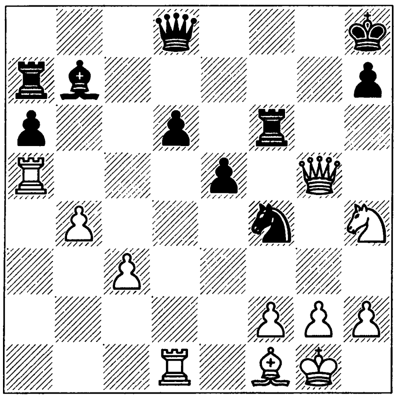
This is the fatal error. Both 27 ♕g3 ♖g8 and 27 ♕h3 ♘f4 would have led to the same thing, but there were two other tries that would have created more complications:

a) 27 ♕g4 is not good because of the very precise 27...♕f6! (27...♘f4 28 ♖xe5 ♗xg2 fails to 29 ♖f5! ♖g7 30 ♕xf4 ♗f3+ 31 ♗g2 and White wins) with similar ideas to the game, i.e. 28 ♖d2 ♘f4 29 g3 ♖g8 30 ♕d7 (all forced) 30...♕xh4 31 ♕xd6 ♗f3 32 ♕xe5+ ♖ag7 and Black's attack seems terribly strong, for example 33 ♗xa6 ♕h3! 34 ♗f1 ♕h6! 35 ♕e1 ♗b7 36 b5 ♕b6 37 ♖a4 ♖xg3+ and White gets mated. The correct continuation would have been the paradoxical move

b) 27 ♘f5! when Black is not better. Possibly his best now is to go for a draw with 27...♘f4 (27...♕g5 28 ♖dxd5 ♖xf5 29 ♕d1 yields White sufficient compensation for the exchange) 28 ♖xd6 ♕g5 (28...♕xd6? is just bad in view of 29 ♕xf4!; while 28...♗xf3 29 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 30 gxf3 ♖d5! 31 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 32 ♗xa6 ♖d1+ 33 ♗f1 ♘e2+ 34 ♔g2 ♘f4+ ends up with a repetition of moves) 29 ♕e3 ♕xf5 30 f3 ♘h3+ 31 ♔h1 (31 gxh3? ♗xf3 32 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5 33 ♖xe5 ♖g7+ 34 ♔f2 ♗g2+ is clearly better for Black) 31...♗xf3 32 ♕xf3 ♘f2+ 33 ♔g1 ♘h3+, etc.

27...♘f4 28 ♕h6 ♖f6 29 ♕g5

B



29...♗xg2!

Here it comes! See the note to White's 20th move.

30 ♗xg2 ♖g7 31 ♕xg7+

White's position is already hopeless, for instance 31 ♕xe5 ♘h3+ 32 ♔f1 (or 32 ♔h1 ♘xf2+ 33 ♔g1 ♘xd1) 32...♖xf2+ 33 ♔e1 ♕xh4; and 31 ♖xe5 ♖xg5 32 ♖xg5 ♘e2+ 33 ♔f1 ♘xc3 34 ♖d3 ♖xf2+.

31...♔xg7 32 ♖xe5 ♕c8!

A very precise move. Soon White will have to drop another piece.

33 ♖e7+

Also losing are 33 ♖g5+ ♔h6 34 ♘f3 ♕xc3 and 33 ♖xd6 ♕g4.

33...♖f7 34 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 35 ♗d5+

Neither 35 ♖xd6 ♕g4 36 ♖xa6 ♘h3+ nor 35 h3 ♕xc3 36 ♖xd6 ♘e2+ 37 ♔f1 ♕a1+ 38 ♔xe2 ♕e5+ can save White.

35...♔f8 36 ♘g2 ♕g4 37 ♖d2 ♕g5 0-1

White resigned as it's all over. From an artistic point of view this is one of my favourite games. I really enjoy this sort of fight.

Game 39

Zapata – Shirov

Manila Olympiad 1992

These annotations were made in June 1992 and first appeared in *Schach*.

Although I played several interesting games in Manila, somehow this one was the most memorable for me. I would also like to mention that this Olympiad was one of the most pleasant events I have ever played in, since it was excellently organized and there was very little dirty chess politics around – in complete contrast to the 1994 Moscow Olympiad. If the Olympiad is well organized it provides a unique opportunity to see the chess world as a whole since you meet so many people there.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♗f4 e5 8 ♗g5 a6 9 ♘a3 b5 10 ♘d5 ♗e7 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 c3 ♗b7 13 ♘c2 ♘b8!? *(D)*

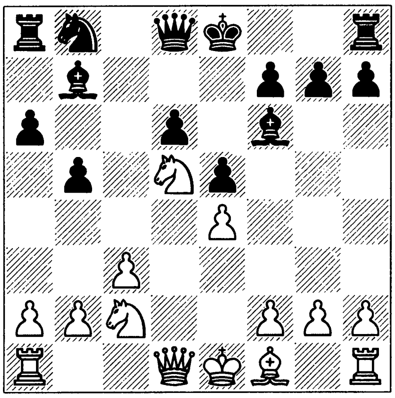
Against Tiviakov at Oakham 1992 I played 13...0-0 14 ♗e2 ♘b8, but White could have exploited this delay with 14 a4! bxa4 15 ♖xa4. I was inspired to try the move in the game by Krasenkov's idea of continuing, after 13...♘b8!? 14 ♘ce3 ♘d7 15 ♘f5, with 15...0-0!, which promises Black good play after both 16 ♘xd6 ♗xd5 17 exd5 ♘b6 18 ♘e4 ♘xd5 and 17 ♕xd5 ♘b6 18 ♕d3 g6! But the Colombian's next moves cast doubt on the text.

[AS – The theory of 13...♘b8 is still developing. Nowadays 14 c4 and 14 g3 are critical and quite popular.]

14 a4 bxa4 15 ♘ce3!

Very strong! White plans the set-up ♕a4 and ♖d1, after which his pieces cooperate harmoniously.

[AS – In a later game Kasparov played 15 ♖xa4 against me (Horgen 1994) and although not everything was clear in that game, this does look more promising than the text.]



15...♘d7

There is no time to defend the a4 pawn. After 15...♗c6 16 ♘f5 0-0 17 ♗c4 Black lags too far behind in development.

[AS – In fact, after 17...♖a7 with the idea of 18...g6, Black is fine, so 15...♗c6 is probably better than 15...♘d7.]

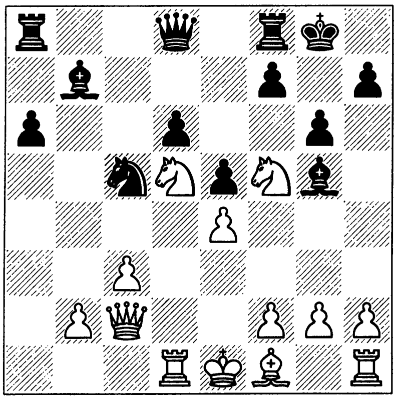
16 ♕xa4 0-0 17 ♖d1 ♗g5

Threatening 18...♗xe3 19 ♘xe3 ♘c5.

18 ♕c2 ♘c5

At this point I thought that I had successfully overcome the problems of the opening. 19...♗xe3 is again threatened, and on 19 ♘c4 or 19 ♗d3 Black obtains good play with 19...♗c6. But Zapata cuts across my plans.

19 ♘f5! g6



20 b4!

I had overlooked this obvious possibility, as well as first 20 h4!? ♗f4 and then 21 b4!, with a clear advantage. Black must avoid this line and continue instead with 20...gxf5 21 hxg5 ♗xd5 (but not 21...♘xe4? 22 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 23 ♕xf5! winning) 22 ♖xd5 ♘xe4, with about even chances.

20...♗xd5

20...gxf5 21 bxc5 ♖c8 22 h4 ♗h6 23 cxd6 appealed to me even less.

21 ♖xd5

21 bxc5 ♗e6 is okay for Black.

21...♘b7 22 h4 ♗f6 23 ♘h6+ ♔g7 24 ♘g4 a5!

Searching for counterplay.

25 ♗e2

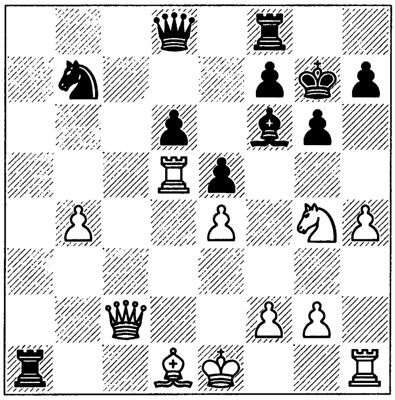
25 b5 was also possible, for example 25...h5 26 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 27 ♗e2 followed by 28 g3 and 29 0-0, with an edge for White.

25...axb4 26 cxb4 ♖a1+

Not 26...♗xh4 27 0-0, when White has good compensation in return for the sacrificed pawn.

27 ♗d1?

The turning point in the game. It was necessary to play 27 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 28 ♕xd1 h5 29 ♘e3 (after 29 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 30 g3 ♘d8!, intending...♘e6-d4, Black has nothing to fear) 29...♕d7 30 ♘d5, with a fine position for White.



27...♕c8!

Zapata was visibly surprised by this move. Running short of time he misses the best reply, 28 ♕xc8 ♖xc8 29 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 30 0-0, and gets into serious difficulties.

[AS – The idea of exchanging queens and the forthcoming manoeuvre (31...♖c4,

32...♖c7) gave me a certain aesthetic pleasure and was the reason I have included this game in the book.]

28 ♘e3 ♕xc2 29 ♘xc2 ♖b1 30 ♔d2 ♖c8 31 ♖h3 ♖c4! 32 ♔d3 ♖c7! 33 ♔d2 ♘d8!

To make progress the minor pieces must be activated. Now White dare not grab the d6 pawn, because after 34...♘e6 Black develops a strong initiative.

34 ♗e2 ♘e6 35 ♖c3 ♖xc3 36 ♔xc3 ♘f4 37 ♖d2 ♘xg2 38 ♗d1!

Instead of the hopeless 38 ♖xd6 ♗xh4, and despite his time-trouble, White comes up with an ingenious idea.

38...♗xh4 39 ♘a3 ♖c1+ 40 ♘c2

The black rook may be trapped but it is not lost.

40...♗g5 41 ♖xd6 h5 42 b5?

The final mistake! After the rebirth of the two queens the dangerous position of White's king means he is lost. During the game I thought that 42 ♔b2 h4 43 ♗g4! was unclear, but after 43...♖f1 44 b5 ♖xf2 45 b6 ♘e3 46 b7 ♖xc2+ 47 ♔b1 ♖c4 48 b8♕ ♘xg4 Black should win thanks to his strong h-pawn.

42...h4 43 b6 h3 44 b7 h2 45 b8♕ h1♕ 46 ♕e8 ♕e1+ 47 ♔b2 ♕xe4 0-1

Game 40

Kramnik – Shirov

Bundesliga 1992/93

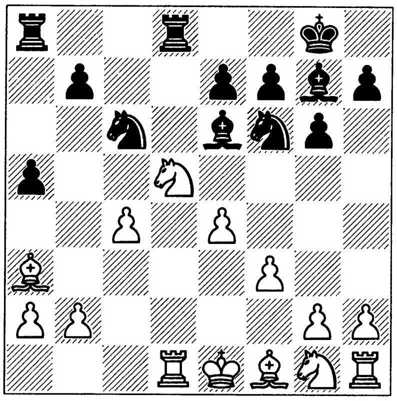
These annotations were made in December 1992 and first appeared in *Schach*.

Although in 1992 Kramnik was just 17 years of age, his play, especially with White, was already terrifying. No wonder that I was preparing for this game for several days and fortunately it wasn't in vain. The novelty I invented was recognized to be the best one in *Informator 55.*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 c5 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 9 ♗xc5 ♘c6 10 ♗a3 a5 11 ♖d1 ♗e6 12 ♘d5

I was of course very familiar with the game Kramnik-Nunn, Manila 1992. After all, following the further moves 12...♗xd5 13 cxd5 ♘b4 14 ♗b5 ♘c2+ 15 ♔f2 ♘xa3 16 bxa3 e6 17 d6 e5 18 ♘e2 ♗f8 19 d7 ♗xa3, it was my own recommendation of 20 g4! with which Vladimir went on to achieve a brilliant victory. During my preparation I at first thought that Black could improve adequately with 16...♖ac8 17 ♘e2 ♖c2, but after 18 ♖c1 ♖xa2 19 a4 White still has more of the play. In the course of further investigation I at last found ...

B



12...♘b4!

A new idea, whereby Black sacrifices a second pawn in order to turn his lead in development to account. I owe special thanks here to my team-mate Karsten Müller, with whom I made a thorough check of the critical variations.

13 ♘xe7+

The only plausible move. 13 ♗xb4 axb4 14 ♘xb4 ♘d7! is not playable.

13...♔h8 14 ♖xd8+

The only viable alternative, 14 ♘d5, is of interest from the theoretical standpoint. Black has two replies:

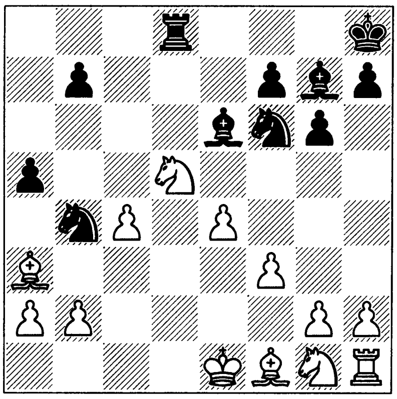
a) 14...♘c2+ 15 ♔f2 ♘xa3 16 bxa3 b5 17 ♘h3 bxc4 18 ♗xc4 ♖ac8, and now neither 19 ♗b3 a4 20 ♗xa4 ♘xd5 21 exd5 ♗xd5 nor 19 ♘b6 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♖xc4 21 ♖d8+ ♘g8 22 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 promises White much, although the second of these two variations is fairly complicated and needs further testing. Also interesting here is Kramnik's suggestion of 16...♗f8; after 17 ♖b1 ♘d7 he considers that Black has sufficient compensation for the two sacrificed pawns.

b) 14...b5!? (this is what I intended to play) 15 ♗xb4 axb4 16 ♘xb4 ♖xd1+ 17 ♔xd1 ♗f8 18 ♘d5 ♖xa2! 19 ♔c2! ♗g7 (19...♖a1!?) 20 ♔b1!, and now Black can, as he prefers, either play for a draw with 20...♖xb2+ 21 ♔xb2 ♘xe4+ 22 ♔c2 ♘f2, or maintain the tension by continuing 20...♖a7!?

[AS – There is more theory on 14 ♘d5 now, but I think it's all available on databases and I suggest that the reader draws his own conclusions about recent developments.]

14...♖xd8 15 ♘d5

Analogous to 13 ♗xb4 above, 15 ♗xb4 axb4 16 ♘d5 ♖a8! 17 ♘xb4 ♘d7! is also bad for White.



15...♘c2+ 16 ♔d2

I had expected 16 ♔f2, when I was also planning to continue 16...♘xa3 17 bxa3 b5. Then after 18 ♘h3 there is a choice between 18...bxc4 19 ♗xc4 ♖c8 20 ♗b3 a4 21 ♗xa4 ♘xd5 22 exd5 ♗xd5 23 ♗b3 ♗xb3 24 axb3 ♖c2+ 25 ♔g3 ♗e5+ 26 f4 ♖c3+ 27 ♔g4 h5+ 28 ♔h4 ♗f6+ 29 ♘g5 ♖xb3 with equality, and 18...♖c8!?, which, though complicated, should not change the assessment of the position after 19 ♘hf4 (19 ♘xf6? ♗xf6 20 cxb5 ♗d4+ 21 ♔e2 ♖c1!) 19...bxc4 20 ♘xe6 fxe6 21 ♘b6 ♘xe4+ 22 ♔e3 ♖c6 23 ♔xe4 ♖xb6 24 ♗xc4 ♖c6.

16...♘xa3 17 bxa3 b5 18 ♘h3 ½-½

In view of the obvious sequel 18...bxc4 19 ♗xc4 ♘xd5 20 exd5 ♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 ♖xd5+ 22 ♔e2 we agreed peace terms.

Game 41

Gelfand – Shirov

Linares 1993

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 57*.

My first Linares tournament started successfully enough, but then I lost two games and dropped to fifty per cent. I also drew a completely winning game against Anand in round 6 and before the present game I was no longer thinking about a good performance. The game appeared to be a breakthrough. I won it (as the reader will see, not without luck), jumped to plus one and then made 3½ points from my last five games. I was also satisfied with the high quality of my play.

At the end of the tournament I realized that, when on form, I needn't be scared of anybody.

1 c4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 g3 c6 4 b3!? a5!?

Formally a novelty but the idea of this pawn advance is quite well known. However, my opponent's reply came as a surprise.

5 ♗b2 a4 6 ♗g2

6 bxa4 ♘d7 would have yielded Black good play for the pawn. The text is rather provocative ...

6...a3!? 7 ♗c3 b5?

So many pawn moves! However, Gelfand's reply immediately sobered me up. Correct was 7...♘f6, with the idea of a later ...b7-b5.

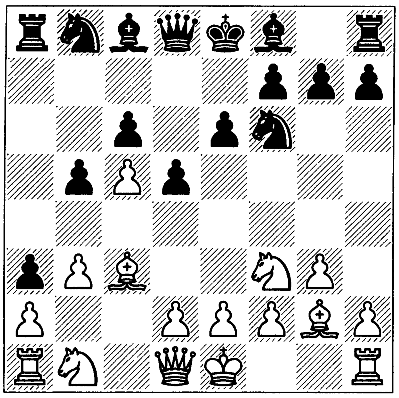
8 c5!

Now White has a clear advantage as the a3 pawn should drop off one day. But accuracy is always necessary ...

8...♘f6 *(D)*

9 b4

9 d4 ♘e4 10 ♗b4 would have been slightly more precise, when White clearly stands better.



9...♘e4!? 10 0-0?!

Now Black arranges strange but very strong counterplay. 10 ♕b3! was called for, when again White is better.

10...♘xc3

Three moves in a row with the knight: a 'logical' sequel to the preceding pawn play!

11 ♘xc3?

Now Black gets an excellent game. Even here, White could have obtained a slight edge by 11 dxc3 g5!? 12 e4! (12 ♕b3 g4 13 ♘fd2 h5! is unclear) 12...♗g7 13 exd5 exd5 (forced) 14 ♖e1+ ♔f8, etc.

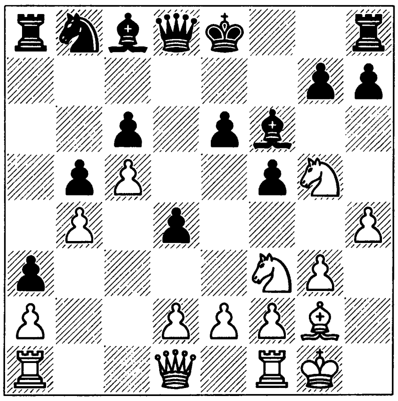
11...d4!

More pawn play! Now the position is very unclear.

12 ♘e4

12 ♘b1!?, with the idea of attacking the a3 pawn one day, was interesting.

12...f5! 13 ♘eg5 ♗e7 14 h4! ♗f6!



After fourteen moves Black has developed just one piece! However, the position is completely unclear because that piece is excellently placed and Black is ready to fight for control of the centre. He has to be careful, though, about the weaknesses at b6 and d6 as well as his light-squared bishop.

15 ♕b3?!

Playing overambitiously, Gelfand soon gets into trouble. He had an interesting exchange sacrifice at his disposal, i.e. 15 e3! h6 16 ♘h3 dxe3 17 dxe3 (17 fxe3 g5! is unclear) 17...♗xa1 18 ♕xa1 0-0 19 ♘f4 and probably White's position is still preferable.

15...♕d5 16 ♕b1?!

Now White cannot get his pieces into play in time. Also unsatisfactory was 16 ♕d3?! h6 17 ♘h7 (both 17 ♘h3 e5 and 17 ♘e1 ♕d7 18 ♘gf3 ♖a4! 19 ♘c2 e5 are good for Black) 17...♗e7! (not 17...♖xh7? 18 ♘g5 hxg5 19 ♗xd5 exd5 20 hxg5 ♗xg5 21 ♔g2) 18 ♘xd4 ♕d7, when Black wins a piece, but 16 ♕c2! h6 17 ♘h3 e5 18 d3 offered better chances of survival.

16...h6 17 ♘h3 e5 18 e3

Now 18 d3 yields Black a clear advantage after 18...♖a4!

18...dxe3!

Only this way! The tempting 18...d3? fails to 19 ♘d4! e4 20 ♘f4 ♕f7 21 h5!!, intending f2-f3, when White is back on top.

19 dxe3

19 fxe3 e4 20 ♘f4 ♕d7 21 ♘d4 ♗xd4 22 exd4 ♕xd4+ leaves White without much compensation for the pawn, but was still a better practical chance. Now Black can make easy moves.

19...♖a4!

The knight on h3 and the b4-pawn are Black's best trumps.

20 ♘d4

Or 20 ♖d1 ♕c4.

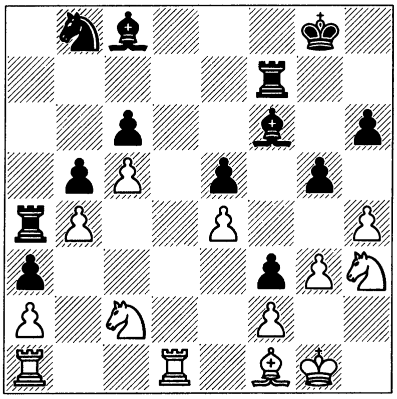
20...♕d7 21 ♘c2 0-0 22 e4?!

22 ♖d1 ♕f7 23 f4!? was the last chance for White to do something about his position, though Black is still better.

22...f4 23 ♕b3+ ♕f7 24 ♕xf7+ ♖xf7 25 ♖fd1 f3! 26 ♗f1 g5

The knight has to give up living.

W



27 ♖d3

27 ♔h2 g4 28 ♘g1 h5 makes no difference as the king and knight are caged tight.

27...g4 28 ♔h2 ♖d7!

The piece can always be taken. Black prefers to deprive his opponent of any activity.

29 ♖ad1

29 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 30 ♘xa3 ♖d2 is also hopeless.

29...♖xd3 30 ♖xd3 ♗e6

The a2 pawn goes, and with it the game. The rest is very easy.

31 ♖d6 ♔f7 32 ♗xb5 cxb5 33 ♖b6 ♘a6 34 ♖xb5 ♗xa2 35 c6 ♗b1 36 ♖b7+ ♔e6 37 ♘xa3 ♖xa3 38 b5 ♗xe4 39 ♖a7 gxh3 40 c7 0-1

Here White lost on time, but after 40...♔d7 he would have had to resign anyway. I hope that this game was fun for the readers.

Game 42

Shirov – Kamsky

Linares 1993

These annotations were made in March 1993 and first appeared in *Schach*.

Gata Kamsky is one of the players against whom I normally have a hard time. I had lost our previous game, in Moscow at the end of 1992, without making any impression in the opening. This time, though, I was better prepared!

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♖c1!?

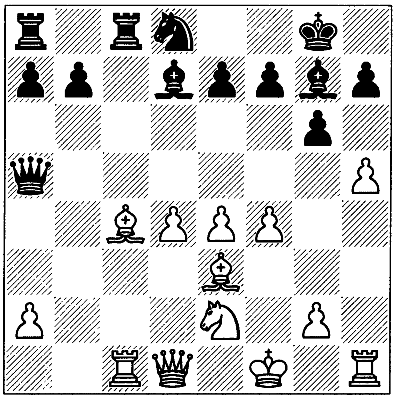
In my view this sharp move is the only way to fight for an advantage. The main variations after 10 0-0 promise White no advantage.

[AS – Nowadays the Polugayevsky variation is not very popular. I think Black has a couple of ways to reach comfortable equality.]

10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♕a5+ 12 ♔f1 ♗d7 13 h4 ♖fc8 14 h5 ♘d8 15 f4!?

This idea came to me shortly after our game in Moscow, which I lost after 15 f3 ♗a4!?, etc. There I played f3-f4 on move 21, so of course it is obvious to try pushing the f-pawn towards the opposing king in a single step.

B



15...♗b5

If Kamsky had stuck to his idea of 15...♗a4 then after 16 ♕d3 b5 17 ♗d5 ♖xc1+ 18 ♗xc1 ♖c8 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 f5 he would have run up against a distinctly stronger attack than in the aforementioned game. An interesting try, though, is 15...e6!? 16 ♔f2 ♖c7, with unclear consequences.

16 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 17 ♔f2 e6!

Probably the best defence. The endgame after 17...♖xc1 18 ♕xc1 ♘c6 19 ♕b1 is fairly unpleasant for Black.

18 g4!

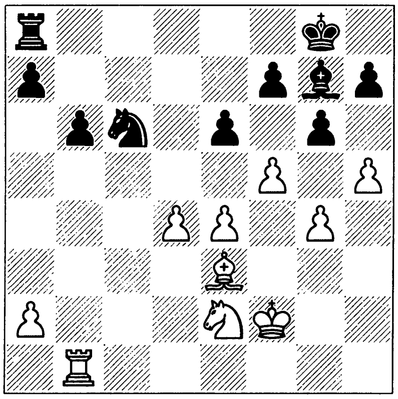
Maintaining the offensive. 18 ♕b3 ♕xb3 19 axb3 ♘c6 and 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♕d2 ♖xc1 20 ♖xc1 ♘c6 lead only to equality.

18...♖xc1 19 ♕xc1 ♘c6 20 ♕b1!

With this pawn structure the ending is not so easy for Black. In contrast, 20 f5?! ♘b4 would have given him full counterplay.

20...♕xb1 21 ♖xb1 b6 22 f5!

Even without the queens White continues his kingside play.



22...♘e7?

Perhaps Black's only mistake of the game. It was also dangerous to accept the pawn sacrifice with 22...exf5 23 gxf5 gxf5, since after 24 h6 ♗f6 (or 24...♗f8 25 ♖c1! ♘e7 26 ♖g1+ ♔h8 27 d5 f6 28 ♗d4 ♘g8 29 e5 is better for White) 25 e5 ♗h4+ 26 ♔f3 Black has problems. However, 22...♖d8 23 e5 ♗f8 offered good defensive chances.

23 h6!

This is more complicated but stronger than my original intention 23 fxe6 fxe6 24 ♗g5 ♔f7 25 ♔e3, which also makes life difficult for Black.

23...♗f8 24 fxe6

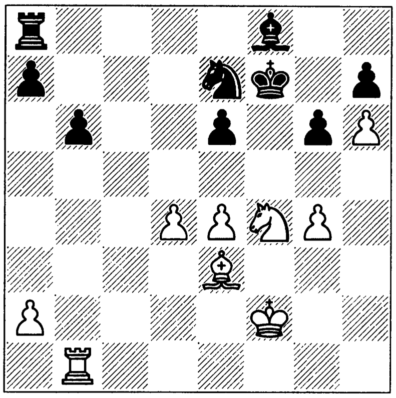
With hindsight I prefer 24 ♖c1!, for example 24...exf5 (24...♖c8? 25 f6 ♖xc1 26 fxe7) 25 gxf5 f6 26 fxg6 hxg6 27 ♖c7 with a clear advantage.

24...fxe6 25 ♘f4 ♔f7!

I had only been looking at 25...♗xh6 26 ♘xe6 and 25...e5 26 dxe5 ♗xh6 27 ♘d5! ♗xe3+ 28 ♔xe3 ♘c6 29 e6, both of which are hopeless for Black.

26 ♘h3 ♔g8 27 ♘f4 ♔f7

At first I was unable to find a clear win, so I decided to repeat moves in order to gain time. Kamsky obviously misinterpreted this, since he offered me a draw here.



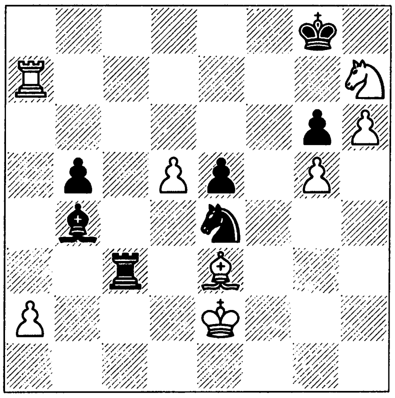
28 ♘h3! ♔g8 29 ♘g5 e5 30 d5 ♘c8!?

On 30...♗xh6 I was planning 31 ♘e6! ♗xe3+ 32 ♔xe3 ♘c8 (32...♖c8 33 d6 ♖c3+ 34 ♔f2! ♖c2+ 35 ♔g3 ♘c6 36 d7 ♖d2 37 ♖c1 wins for White) 33 ♖c1! ♘d6 34 ♖c6! ♘f7 35 ♔d3!! with the threat of 36 d6 ♘d8 37 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 38 ♔c4.

31 ♖c1! ♘d6 32 ♖c7! ♖c8

Again Black could not capture on h6: 32...♗xh6 33 ♘xh7 ♘xe4+ 34 ♔f3 ♘d2+ 35 ♗xd2 ♗xd2 36 ♔e4 ♗b4 37 ♘f6+ ♔f8 38 ♔xe5 ♖d8 39 ♖xa7 and wins.

33 ♖d7! ♖c3 34 ♘xh7 ♘xe4+ 35 ♔e2 ♗b4 36 ♖xa7 b5 37 g5!



Black's apparent activity is only short-term. The text move makes it clear that sooner or later the hammer will fall with ♘f6+.

37...♘g3+ 38 ♔d1 ♘e4 39 ♔e2 ♘g3+ 40 ♔d1 ♘e4 41 ♗b6 ♖f3 42 ♗d8! ♖f1+ 43 ♔c2 ♖f2+ 44 ♔b3 ♗c5 45 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 46 ♖g7+ ♔f8 47 gxf6 ♖f3+ 48 ♔c2 ♖f2+ 49 ♔d1 ♖f1+ 50 ♔e2 ♖f2+ 51 ♔e1 ♖xa2 52 ♗e7+ ♗xe7 53 fxe7+ ♔e8 54 d6 1-0

[AS – This was one of the best endings of my career so far.]

Game 43
Shirov – Kasparov
Linares 1993

These annotations were made in March 1993 and first appeared in the German magazine *Schach 64*.

In Linares I played my third game against the World Champion. Kasparov had won the first two, albeit with some luck in the second, but this time I no longer felt as if I was squaring up for an unequal struggle.

[AS – Hopefully I will return to such confidence playing against people like Kasparov as soon as possible ...]

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3

I normally play 3 ♘c3, but it is usually advisable to side-step Kasparov's preparation. I also wanted to try out a new idea.

3...♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♘f3 ♘bd7 7 0-0 e5 8 h3 c6 9 e4 ♕b6 10 c5!? dxc5 11 dxe5 ♘e8 12 e6!?

This pawn sacrifice is not mentioned in current openings work, e.g. the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings*. The 'copyright' belongs to the Czech IM Milos Mozny, and my preparation was based on three of his games. Before my duel with Kasparov I had subjected the idea to long analysis with the Greek GM Kotronias, and we came to the conclusion that it led to an advantage for White. As so often, a fine nuance altered this assessment, but more of that later.

12...fxe6 13 ♘g5 ♘e5!

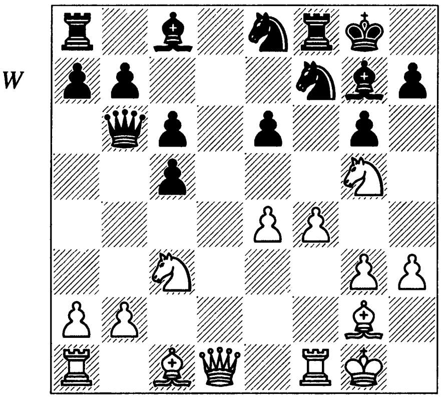
The strongest reply. After 13...♘c7 14 f4 ♗d4+ 15 ♔h2 e5 16 f5 ♘f6 17 g4 White stands better. Worth considering is 13...e5!? 14 ♕e2 ♕a6!? 15 ♕xa6 bxa6 with unclear play, although deactivating the g7 bishop like this would not suit everyone.

14 f4 ♘f7!

I had not really examined this move with Kotronias. It was becoming clear that Kasparov was on the right track, but as a result of my opening preparation he was using up a lot of time searching for the best continuation at every move, and was gradually getting into time-trouble. Mozny's opponents chose alternative possibilities:

a) 14...♘d3, and now after 15 e5 (not 15 ♕xd3? c4+ 16 ♗e3 cxd3 17 ♗xb6 axb6 with advantage to Black) 15...c4+ 16 ♔h2 ♘c7 17 ♘ce4 White stands well;

b) 14...h6 15 fxe5 ♖xf1+ 16 ♕xf1 hxg5 17 ♗xg5 ♕xb2 18 ♖d1! with a big advantage for White, Mozny-Ankerst, Munich 1992.



15 ♘xf7 ♗d4+

The point of Black's defence. He avoids the incarceration of his king's bishop, as would occur after 15...♖xf7? 16 e5.

[AS – This check (i.e. 15...♗d4+) was missed during our analysis.]

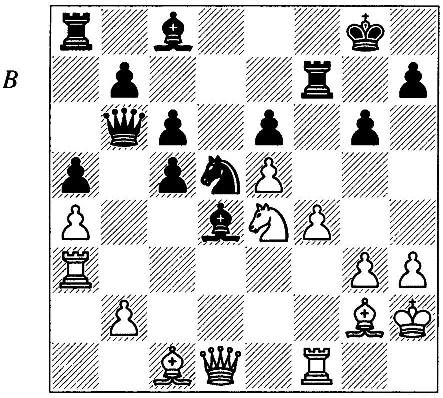
16 ♔h2 ♖xf7 17 e5 ♘c7 18 ♘e4 ♘d5

The opening is over, and I was gradually coming to the realization that I had little concrete initiative in return for my pawn.

19 a4!

The positional threat of a5-a5 is unpleasant. If White was allowed to play this he would be able to pick off the c5 pawn, for example 20 a5 ♕c7 21 ♕c2, followed perhaps by ♗d2 and ♖fc1.

19...a5 20 ♖a3



Interpolating the moves a4 and ...a5 has made it possible to activate the rook. White now has some compensation – he has the plan of g3-g4 and ♖g3 (or ♖af3), or even h3-h4, g3-g4, ♖h3 and h4-h5. In view of the latter idea, 20...♕d8 was now advisable.

20...♕c7?! 21 ♘d6! ♖f8?!

After this Black's position becomes critical, although it is by no means lost. Two other rook moves were also no good (22...♖g7?? 22 ♘e8; 22...♖e7 23 ♕g4 followed by h4-h5 with an attack), but 21...♖d7 was correct: 22 ♗xd5 (otherwise Black sacrifices the exchange on d6 and stands well) 22...cxd5 (22...exd5 potentially gives White two passed pawns) 23 ♘b5 (better than winning the exchange by 23 ♘e8?! ♕d8 24 ♘f6+ ♔g7 25 ♘xd7 ♗xd7, when Black does not stand worse) 23...♕d8! (not 23...♕b6?! 24 ♖d3! ♖f7 25 b3 ♗d7 26 ♘xd4 cxd4 27 ♗b2, followed by ♗xd4, which is better for White) 24 ♘xd4 cxd4 25 ♕xd4 b6 with only a minimal advantage for White.

22 h4

Here I began to play quickly, since the plan of attack on the kingside was clear. Kasparov on the other hand was thinking a long time over every move.

22...b6 23 h5 ♕g7 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 ♗e4

I had underestimated Black's reply. 25 ♕g4!? came very much into consideration (by targeting the e6 pawn White prevents Black from activating the bishop at a6): 25...♗d7 26 ♗f3 with the plan of ♔g2 and ♖h1.

25...♗a6!

A very disruptive move, since on the obvious continuation 26 ♖h1 Black has the strong counter 26...♗xe5! – see the following note.

26 ♖e1

26 ♖h1 fails to 26...♗xe5! 27 fxe5 ♖f2+ and now:

a) 28 ♗g2 ♕xe5 29 ♕g4 ♔g7 30 ♘e4 ♖h8+ 31 ♔g1 ♖c2 and Black wins;

b) 28 ♔h3 is no better of course because of 28...♕h8+ 29 ♔g4 ♕xe5;

c) 28 ♔g1 ♖af8! 29 ♖f3 ♖8xf3 30 ♗xf3 ♖f1+ 31 ♕xf1 ♗xf1 32 ♔xf1 ♕xe5 and again Black is winning.

26...♘e7! 27 ♔g2 ♖ad8! *(D)*

Black's last move was like lightning from a clear sky. I had only reckoned on 27...♘f5 (this was the obvious intention of 26...♘e7), for example 28 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 (forced, since 28...gxf5 or 28...exf5 is met by 29 g4! followed by ♖g3) 29 ♗e3!, with advantage to White in view of the many pawn weaknesses in Black's camp. Kasparov's move threatens ...♗xe5. At this point Kasparov had only six minutes left for the remaining thirteen moves, while I still had more than an hour. Here, though, I lost half my lead on the clock searching in vain for a continuation that would lead to my advantage. I suddenly realized that I do not stand better.

28 ♖b3

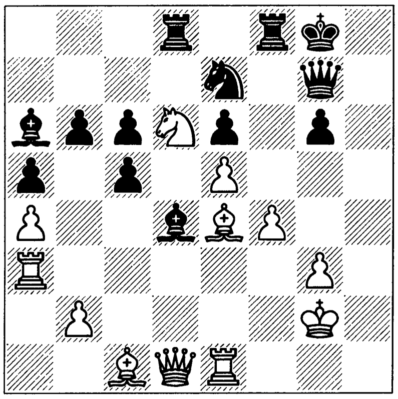
The position after 28 ♕b3 c4! 29 ♘xc4 ♗c5 is completely unclear, and 28 ♕g4 ♘f5 might even favour Black.

28...♗xe5!

28...c4? 29 ♕xd4 cxb3 30 ♕xb6 cannot possibly appeal to Black.

29 fxe5 ♕xe5 30 ♕g4

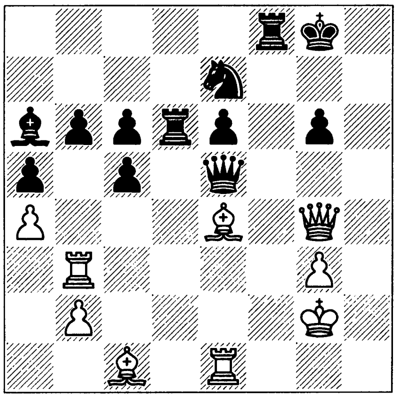
W



The obvious 30 ♗f4 leads after 30...♖xf4 31 gxf4 ♕xf4 to a big disadvantage for White, whose once mighty knight on d6 is now lost.

30...♖xd6

W



31 ♗f4

This move does not turn out well. I should have gone in for the complications after 31 ♗xg6:

a) 31...♕xe1? 32 ♗d3+! ♔f7 33 ♕h5+ ♔g7 (or 33...♔f6 34 ♗g5+ ♔e5 35 ♗d2+ ♔d4 36 ♕h4+) 34 ♗h6+ ♔g8 35 ♕g5+ ♔f7 36 ♕g7+ ♔e8 37 ♕xf8+ ♔d7 38 ♗xa6, and Black has no compensation for the piece;

b) 31...♕g7 32 ♖xe6 and now:

b1) 32...♖d4? is bad because of 33 ♕g5! ♗f1+ 34 ♔h2! (Kasparov), but other variations lead to a draw:

b2) 32...♘xg6 33 ♖xd6 ♘f4+ 34 ♕xf4 ♖xf4 35 ♗xf4 ♗c4! 36 ♖xb6 ♗d5+ 37 ♔f1 (or 37 ♔h3 ♕h7+ 38 ♔g4 ♕g7+) 37...♕g4! 38 ♖b8+ ♔f7 39 ♖b7+ ♔e8;

b3) 32...♖xe6 33 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 and perpetual check with 34 ♕h3+, etc.

All in all, I would have risked nothing with the correct 31 ♗xg6, and would even have had winning chances in view of Kasparov's time-trouble.

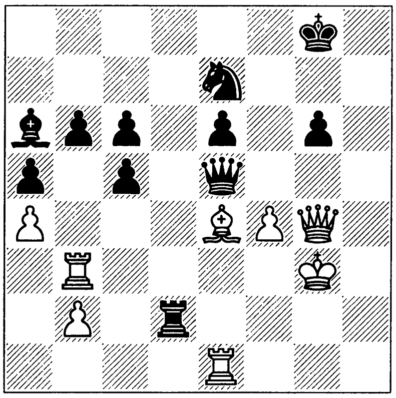
[AS – GM Tseshkovsky's suggestion, 31 ♖xb6!?, is also interesting.]

31...♖xf4 32 gxf4 ♖d2+!

If 32...♕d4 (threatening...♕d2+) then 33 ♕h4!

33 ♔g3

B



33...♕f6?!

In time-trouble Kasparov did not want to risk anything and so rejected 33...♕d4 34 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 35 ♖be3 (35 ♖f3? ♕h8!) 35...♗c8 36 ♕e5 ♕xe5 37 fxe5 ♖xb2. The next day he said that his position in this variation (after 37...♖xb2) was winning, but he was unable to refute the following idea: 38 ♖d3! ♗f5 39 e6! ♗xe6 (not 39...♖b4? 40 ♖d8+ ♔g7 41 ♗xf5 ♘xf5+ 42 ♔g2 ♘e7 43 ♖e8! ♔f6 44 ♖f8+ ♔g5 45 ♖f7! ♖g4+ 46 ♔f3 ♘f5 47 e7 ♖f4+ 48 ♔e2 ♖e4+ 49 ♔d2) 40 ♗xg6 ♗d5 41 ♗e4! ♖b3 (after 41...c4 42 ♖f3+ ♔g7 43 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 44 ♖e6 c5 45 ♖d6 ♖d2 46 ♔h4! Black cannot escape the perpetual check) 42 ♖xb3 ♗xb3 43 ♖b1 c4 (or 43...♗d5 44 ♗c2! ♘c8 45 ♔f4, followed by ♗f5) 44 ♔f4! b5 45 axb5 cxb5 46 ♔e5 a4 47 ♔d4 a3 48 ♔c5 ♗a4 49 ♖a1 draw.

34 ♖xb6 ♗d3! 35 ♖b8+ ♔f7 36 ♕h3

On 36 ♖h1 Kasparov (with his flag hanging) intended 36...♗xe4 37 ♖h7+ ♕g7 38 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 39 ♕xe6 ♘f5+ 40 ♔h3 ♖d3+ 41 ♔h2 ♖d2+, when the white king cannot escape perpetual check, since for example 42 ♔g1? ♖g2+ 43 ♔f1 ♘g3+ 44 ♔e1 ♖e2+ 45 ♔d1 ♗c2+ loses the queen. I also looked at 36 ♖h1, finally rejecting it because of 36...♕g7! 37 ♗xd3 ♖xd3+ 38 ♔g2 ♖d2+ 39 ♔f1 (after 39 ♔f3? ♖xb2 40 ♖xb2 ♕c3+!! 41 ♔e4 ♕xb2 Black is probably winning) 39...♖d4!, when the only problems I can see are White's.

36...♗xe4 37 ♕h7+ ♕g7 38 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 39 ♖xe4 ♘f5+ 40 ♔f3 ♔f6

The time-trouble was over and at first I thought I had some winning chances, but after a few moves it became clear to me that the position is a draw.

41 ♖c4 ♖d5 42 ♖f8+ ♔e7 43 ♖a8 ♘d6 44 ♖c3

44 ♖c2 c4 45 ♖h2 ♘f5 46 ♖h7+ ♔d6 doesn't lead anywhere, since Black has the emergency exit on c5.

44...c4 45 ♖a6 ♖c5 46 b3 ♔f6 47 bxc4 ½-½

In view of the variation 47...♘xc4 48 ♔e4 ♘d6+ 49 ♔d3 ♖d5+ 50 ♔c2 ♘f5 51 ♖d3 ♖c5+ 52 ♖c3 I offered a draw, which Kasparov accepted.

Game 44

Seirawan – Shirov

Buenos Aires 1993

These annotations were made in May 1993 and first appeared in *Revista Internacional de Ajedrez*.

During the Buenos Aires tournament I met my future wife who was demonstrating the games for the public. Possibly it prevented me from showing my best chess there but at least I had some excitements such as this game.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 a6!?

Normally I play the Semi-Slav Defence (4...e6, etc.), but sometimes I get bored employing the same openings over and over, even if they are good enough to equalize. The 4...a6 variation has been seriously investigated and developed by the Moldavian trainer Viacheslav Chebanenko and his pupils, among whom I should particularly mention Gavrikov and Bologan. It is through them that I know this line, although nowadays it is also practised by many other players.

[AS – The Chebanenko system usually arises after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 a6. The text move-order allows White to play 5 ♕c2!?, which came into practice in 1994.]

5 ♘f3

Here 5 a4 is interesting.

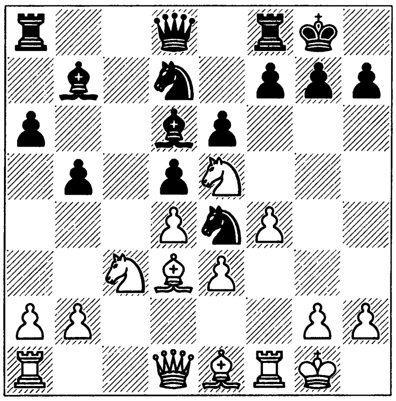
5...b5 6 cxd5

This doesn't seem very ambitious. Generally White plays 6 b3 here.

6...cxd5 7 ♘e5 ♘bd7 8 f4 e6 9 ♗d3 ♗b7 10 0-0 ♗d6 11 ♗d2 0-0 12 ♗e1 ♘e4!?

Black has developed comfortably and is now ready to start fighting for the initiative. Also possible was 12...♘b6 13 ♗h4 ♗e7 with equal chances.

W



13 ♕b1!? ♘df6

Continuing with my aggressive strategy. After 13...f5 Seirawan was planning 14 a4!, which seems to lead to equality after 14...b4 *[AS – 14...bxa4 seems to be equal as well.]* 15 ♘xe4 fxe4 (but not 15...dxe4? 16 ♗c4 ♗d5 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 ♕a2 with the advantage – Seirawan) 16 ♗e2 ♘xe5 17 fxe5 ♖xf1+ 18 ♗xf1 ♗e7.

14 ♗h4!? ♖c8?!

After making this move I began calling myself an idiot, because I saw 15 ♗xe4 dxe4 16 ♘g4. Better, perhaps, is 14...♕a5 immediately, and if 15 ♖c1, then 15...♖fc8. I must point out that 14...♘d2 was bad, because of 15 ♕c2 (but not 15 ♗xh7+?? ♘xh7) 15...♘xf1 16 ♗xh7 ♘xh7+ (I don't see a good defence after 16...♔h8 17 ♖xf1, for example 17...g6 18 ♗xg6! fxg6 19 ♕xg6 ♕e7 20 ♕h6+! ♔g8 21 ♖f3 or 17...b4 18 ♖f3! bxc3 19 ♖h3) 17 ♗xd8 ♘xe3 18 ♕f2!, with a small advantage (18...♘xg2? fails to 19 ♗b6 and White is winning).

[AS – Of course, instead of 18...♘xg2? Black can simply play 18...♗xe5 19 fxe5 (19 dxe5 d4!) ♘g4 20 ♕g3 ♘xe5 21 ♗e7 ♖fe8 and his chances are just a little worse.]

15 ♖c1?!

When I saw this I sighed with relief. However I should point out that 15 ♗xe4 dxe4 16 ♘g4 doesn't win, as the post-mortem analysis later showed. After 16...♗e7 17 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18 ♘xf6+ (18 ♘xe4 ♗e7) 18...♕xf6 19 ♘xe4 ♕g6 20 ♘g3, 20...♕xb1 21 ♖axb1 ♖c2 22 ♖f2 ♖fc8 doesn't equalize completely because of 23 ♖e1, but Black can play a curious queen sacrifice: 20...♖c2 21 ♖f2 ♖fc8! 22 f5! ♖xf2! 23 fxg6 ♖xg2+ 24 ♔f1 fxg6 25 e4 ♖cc2 26 ♕e1 h5! 27 ♖c1 ♖xb2 and it doesn't seem that White has anything better than 28 ♖b1 ♖xa2 29 ♖a1 with equal chances, since after 28 h4, the continuation 28...g5! is very strong.

[AS – Here I made a big mistake in my old analysis. After 28...g5 White wins easily with 29 ♕e3 gxh4 30 ♘xh5 ♖g4 31 d5, which means that instead of the incorrect queen sacrifice 21...♖fc8?!, Black should try to survive in the worse endgame arising after 20...♕xb1 21 ♖axb1 ♖c2 22 ♖f2 ♖fc8 23 ♖e1 ♖xf2 24 ♔xf2 ♖c2+ 25 ♖e2 ♖c1!?]

15...♕a5

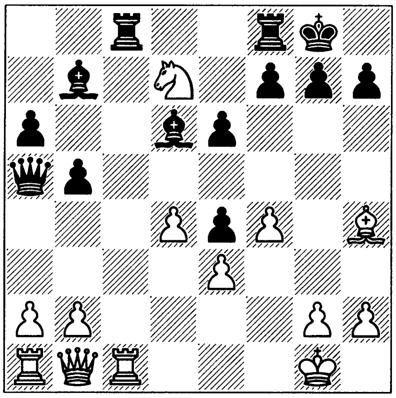
It was also good to play 15...♗e7 16 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 (or 16...gxf6 17 ♘g4 f5 18 ♘e5) 17 b4! ♕d6 18 a3 ♖c7 19 ♖a2 ♖fc8 20 ♖ac2 with equality.

16 ♗xe4

After the game Seirawan suggested 16 a4!?, but I don't believe that Black has any problems after 16...bxa4 17 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 18 ♖xa4 ♕b6 19 ♕a2 ♖a8, or even 16...b4 17 ♘xe4 ♖xc1+ 18 ♕xc1 ♘xe4 19 ♗xe4 dxe4 20 ♘c4 ♕d5 21 b3 ♖c8 22 ♖a2 ♖c6 23 ♖c2 f6.

16...♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 ♘d7

B



Here I spent about 20 or 25 minutes, leaving less than half an hour for the following 22 moves. But Seirawan had only 15 minutes and this fact greatly influenced my decision. I saw that the position after 18...♖fe8 19 ♘c5 ♗d5 20 b4 ♕b6 would be about equal and then started thinking about a tempting rook sacrifice (18...♕d2!?). At first I found nothing to counter 19 ♘xf8 ♕xe3+ 20 ♗f2 ♕xf4 21 g3, because 21...♕f3 22 ♖xc8 e3 runs into the unfortunate 23 ♕xh7 mate, but I continued calculating and finally made up my mind, convinced that in any case I would not be worse after the sacrifice. Probably I was wrong, since had Seirawan made the right moves, I would have had to find the only way to survive.

[AS – I still like this sacrifice but I am not sure I would have done it, had I seen more during the game.]

18...♕d2?! 19 ♘xf8 ♕xe3+ 20 ♗f2 ♕xf4 21 g3?!

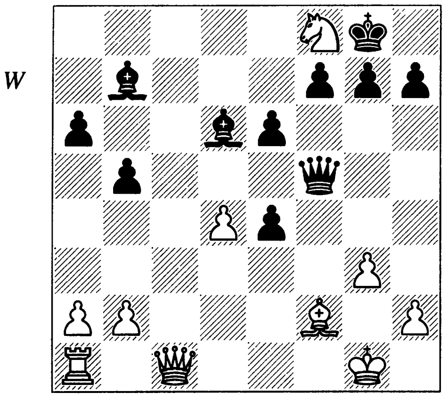
This natural move is not the best. After 21 ♖xc8 ♕xh2+ 22 ♔f1 ♗xc8 23 ♕xe4 ♗xf8 24 ♖c1 ♗d7 25 ♕b7, the only way to draw is 25...♕h1+! 26 ♗g1 ♕h6! 27 ♖c7

♗e8 28 ♖c8 ♕d2! 29 ♖xe8 ♕d1+ 30 ♔f2 ♕d4+ and White cannot win.

[AS – Another commentary error. Instead of 29 ♖xe8, 29 g3! wins since Black has no perpetual check and ultimately loses his bishop. The correct continuation is 21...♗xc8! (not 21...♕xh2+) 22 g3 ♕f5! 23 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 with sufficient compensation for the exchange].

21...♖xc1+ 22 ♕xc1 ♕f5!!

This is the key move of the combination which began with 18...♕d2.



23 ♗e3

23 ♘xe6 would have lost to 23...e3!! 24 ♕xe3 ♕d5 25 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 26 ♗g1 (26 ♔e2 ♕xa1) 26...♕g2+ 27 ♔e1 ♗b4+ 28 ♔d1 ♗f3+ 29 ♔c1 ♗d2+! 30 ♕xd2 ♕f1+ 31 ♔c2 ♗e4+ 32 ♔b3 ♕c4+ 33 ♔a3 ♕a4 mate.

23...♗xf8

Now Black is a little bit better, but my best chance was still his time-trouble.

[AS – The text is probably stronger than 23...♔xf8 24 ♗f4!]

24 ♕c7 ♕f3 25 ♕f4 ♕e2 26 ♕f2 ♕d3!

Not 26...♕c4? 27 ♖c1! ♕xa2? 28 ♖c7.

27 ♕d2

After 27 ♖c1 ♗d5 28 ♕d2 f6! Black keeps a small advantage.

27...♕c4 28 b3 ♕d5 29 ♖c1 ♗d6 30 ♕a5 h6 31 ♕d8+ ♔h7 32 ♕d7??

A terrible but understandable mistake when his flag was almost ready to fall.

[AS – After 32 ♔g2 White would have retained good drawing chances.]

32...♗f4 0-1

Simple and decisive. White resigned.

Game 45
Shirov – Lutz
Munich 1993

These annotations were made in May 1993 and first appeared in the German magazine *Schach 64*.

The tournament in Munich which was run by the late Heinrich Jellissen was one of the best organized in the world. When he died it was a shock to learn that he had severe financial problems. Many chess-players and friends of his who had invested big sums in his suspicious business never saw their money again. It doesn't feel great that in a way I played for the money of my colleagues (I didn't invest anything with Jellissen myself) but this can happen to anybody.

My best game from the tournament was the present one. It was also important for determining the winner of the tournament. Munich appeared to be the strongest event I have ever been clear first in.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 ♕d2 a6 8 0-0-0 h6 9 ♗e3 ♗e7

In this well-known position I thought for a long time. I had frequently played the black side of this variation, but this was the first time I had had it on the board as White. I thought I remembered having had most problems against 10 f3, so this was my choice, although in retrospect it was not such a good one.

10 f3?! ♘xd4!

I had simply forgotten that this move leads to equality.

[AS – The mark '?!' is too emotive. Of course, 10 f3 is as common as 10 f4.]

11 ♗xd4

[AS – Against Alon Greenfeld (Pardubice 1994) I played 11 ♕xd4 and won. The game Bologan-Lutz, Bundesliga 1994/95, is probably the critical example of this line.]

11...e5 12 ♗e3 ♗e6! 13 g4

Starting the kingside advance with 13 h4 also leads to equality after 13...♕a5 14 ♔b1 ♖c8 15 ♘d5 ♕xd2 16 ♘xf6+ gxf6 17 ♖xd2 f5.

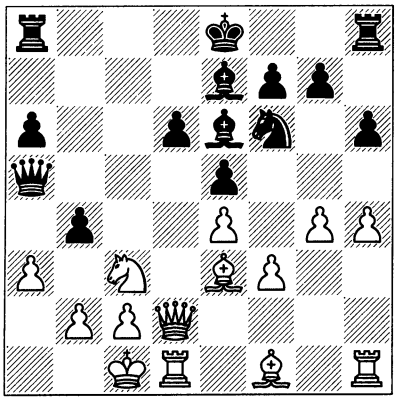
13...♕a5 14 a3

On 14 ♔b1, 14...♖c8 is good, for example 15 h4?! ♖xc3! 16 ♕xc3 ♕xa2+ 17 ♔c1 d5! with an attack for Black.

14...b5!?

This tempting advance is at the same time very committal. The simple 14...♖c8 is good for Black: 15 ♗d3! (this is better than the two alternatives 15 h4 ♖xc3 16 ♕xc3 ♕xc3 17 bxc3 d5 and 15 ♘d5 ♕xd2+ 16 ♖xd2 ♘xd5 17 exd5 ♗d7, intending ...♗g5, when Black is slightly better) 15...d5 (15...b5 16 ♔b1! is good for White but 15...♖xc3 is quite playable: 16 ♕xc3 ♕xc3 17 bxc3 d5 18 g5! ♗xa3+ 19 ♔b1 with an unclear position) 16 ♘xd5 ♕xd2+ 17 ♖xd2 ♘xd5 18 exd5 ♗xd5 19 ♗b5+! ♗c6 20 ♗xc6+ ♖xc6 with equality.

15 h4 b4



16 ♘d5

Forced, as 16 axb4? only leads to problems: 16...♕a1+ 17 ♘b1 ♖c8! (inferior is 17...♗a2? 18 ♕c3, followed by ♔d2, with slightly better chances for White) 18 ♗d3 (18 c3 d5 19 g5 d4 20 gxf6 dxc3 21 bxc3 ♗xb4! with advantage to Black) 18...d5! 19 g5 d4 20 gxf6 gxf6! and Black wins.

Otto Borik gives some further analysis:

a) 21 ♗xh6 ♗a2 22 c3 and now not 22...dxc3?? 23 ♗b5+ and White mates, but 22...♖xh6 winning back the piece under favourable circumstances. If 23 ♕xh6, then 23...dxc3 24 ♕h8+ ♗f8 25 ♖h2 ♗xb1 26 ♗xb1 cxb2+ 27 ♔d2 ♖d8+ 28 ♔e3 ♖xd1 and Black wins.

b) 21 ♗f2 prevents the motif of the above-mentioned variation (...♖xh6 is not possible), but Black has the initiative, for example 21...♗a2 22 c3 dxc3 and now:

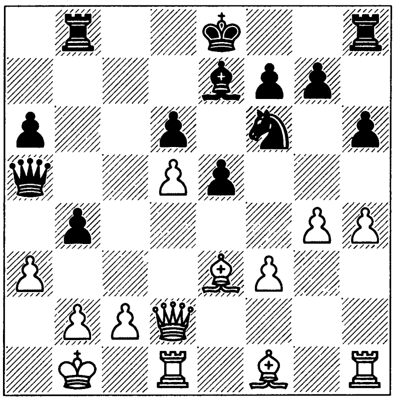
b1) 23 ♗b5+ doesn't work here, because there is no white bishop on h6; Black wins with 23...♔f8.

b2) 23 ♕e2 (or any other move with the queen) loses after 23...♗xb4!.

b3) 23 bxc3 ♗xb1 24 ♕b2 (or 24 ♗xb1 ♖xc3+) 24...♖xc3+ 25 ♕xc3 ♕xc3+ 26 ♔xb1 ♗xb4 and Black should win.

16...♗xd5 17 exd5 ♖b8 18 ♔b1

Again the best move. 18 ♗c4 would have been bad because of 18...♕c7 with the double threat of ...♕xc4 and ...bxa3.



White is well prepared for his opponent's attack on the queen's wing. Thus 18...♕a4 makes possible the resource 19 b3! ♕xa3 20 ♗c4, with good compensation for the pawn, since nothing is currently happening on the queenside whereas White is getting underway with g4-g5. 18...♘d7! was best, after which 19 ♗d3! is the only sensible reply. Black then has three possibilities:

a) 19...♘c5? 20 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 21 a4 is favourable for White;

b) 19...♕xd5 20 axb4 ♕xf3 21 g5! with the idea of 21...hxg5 22 ♖hf1 ♕g4 23 hxg5

♕xb4 24 c3, and here it is White who is attacking;

c) 19...♕a4 20 b3 (not 20 axb4? ♖xb4 21 c3 ♖b7 22 ♕c2 ♕a5 followed by ...0-0 and ...♖fb8, when Black develops an attack on the king) 20...♕xa3 21 g5 with good play for the pawn.

18...♗d8?

To be frank, I hadn't even considered this move. When I started pondering my reply, ...♗d8 at first seemed good to me – after all, the queen is protected on a5 and Black threatens simply to take on a3. But then I discovered the flaw ...

19 axb4 ♖xb4

After 19...♕xb4 20 ♕xb4 ♖xb4 21 ♗xa6 Black does not have enough for the pawn.

20 ♕c3!

This move poses Black great problems.

20...0-0

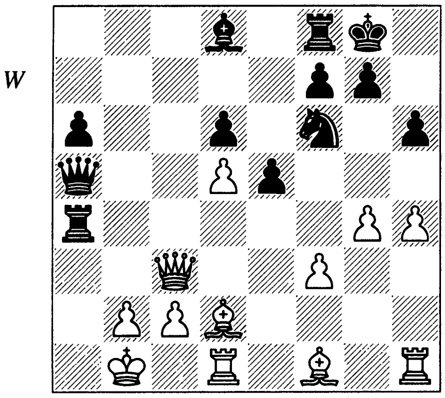
Bad is 20...♖a4 21 ♕xa5 ♖xa5 22 ♗c4, and the rook is caught with the moves b2-b4, c2-c3 and ♗b3. And 20...♖b8 loses a pawn after 21 ♕xa5 ♗xa5 22 ♗xa6.

21 ♗d2!

White must turn his attention to the queenside. There is nothing to be obtained on the opposite flank, for example 21 g5? ♘xd5! 22 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 23 ♕xb4 ♕xf3 and Black is winning.

21...♖a4

Here 21...♘xd5 fails to 22 ♕d3.



22 b4!

Now Black has problems with his rook. Weaker would have been 22 b3 (or 22 ♕xa5? ♗xa5 23 b3 ♖b8!) 22...♕xc3 23 ♗xc3 ♖f4 24 ♗e2 a5 with counterplay (pointed out by Lutz).

22...♕c7

Very bad for Black would have been 22...♕xd5 23 ♕b3 ♕c6 24 b5 and White wins.

23 ♔b2!

The best move, whereas 23 ♕b3 ♕d7 24 ♗h3 ♕e8 is much less promising. And after 23 ♕xc7 ♗xc7 24 ♔b2 ♖b8 25 ♔b3 ♖a5! 26 c4 ♘d7! Black performs a balancing act and manages to hold everything together.

23...♘xd5?

The decisive error, after which White's victory is not in doubt. Also losing were 23...♕d7 24 ♕c6! and 23...a5 24 ♕xc7 ♗xc7 25 ♔b3 ♖xb4+ 26 ♗xb4 axb4 27 ♗b5. But 23...♕b7 would have made further resistance possible, even if the position after 24 ♕b3 ♕d7 25 ♗h3 ♕e8 26 ♖a1 ♖xa1 27 ♖xa1 is obviously advantageous for White.

24 ♕xc7 ♗xc7 25 ♔b3 ♘b6 26 ♗e3 a5

There is nothing else.

27 c3!

A last refinement. The threat of ♗xb6 followed by ♔xa4 decides.

27...axb4 28 ♗xb6 1-0

And since after 28...♖a3+ 29 ♔xb4 ♖fa8 30 ♗xc7 Black is short of both a perpetual check and two bishops, he resigned.

[AS – A strange way to trap a rook. I have never had any other experiences like this.]

Game 46
Kotronias – Shirov
Chalkidiki 1993

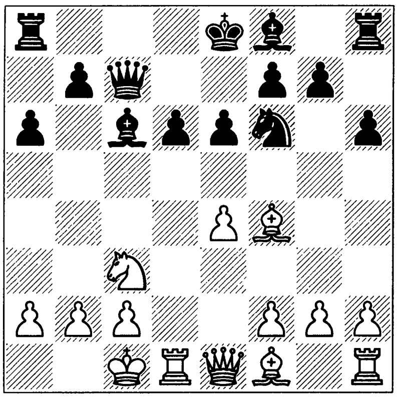
These annotations were made in September 1993 and first appeared in the German magazine *Schach 64.*

The Chalkidiki tournament was played practically on the beach and I had a feeling that my chess was sometimes more relaxed than it should have been. But I really like two of my games from that event and have included them both in this book. Perhaps 'beach chess' isn't so bad after all!

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 ♕d2 a6 8 0-0-0 h6 9 ♗f4 ♗d7 10 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 11 ♕e1 ♕c7?!

Curiously enough I had made the same mistake once before, against Topalov at Oviedo 1992. Apparently I didn't learn anything from this experience.

[AS – At Buenos Aires in 1994 (the Lyev Polugayevsky theme tournament) I played the correct 11...♗e7 against Karpov and equalized after 12 e5 ♘h5 13 ♗e3 ♕c7 14 ♗e2 g6 (this is what Kotronias showed me after our game) 15 ♗xh5 gxh5 16 ♗f4 0-0-0 17 f3 ♗g5!? 18 ♗xg5 hxg5, etc. The game was drawn.]



12 h4?!

Now the mistake can be corrected. Stronger in my opinion is 12 ♘d5! ♗xd5 13 exd5 ♖c8 14 c3 e5 15 ♔b1 with a slight advantage.

12...♗e7

In the above-mentioned game against Topalov I hit upon the incorrect idea of 12...b5 13 ♘d5 ♗xd5 14 exd5 e5?! (better is 14...♖c8, but White is slightly better) 15 ♔b1 ♗e7 16 ♗c1, and Topalov defeated me spectacularly after the further moves 16...0-0?! 17 g4! ♘xg4?! 18 ♖g1 h5 19 f3 ♘f6 20 ♗d3 ♔h8 21 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 22 ♕g3+ ♘g4 (Black also loses after 22...♔h8 23 ♕g5 e4 [or 23...♘h7 24 ♕f5 ♘f6 25 ♗g5] 24 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 25 ♕h6+ ♔g8 26 ♖g1+) 23 fxg4, etc.

13 e5 d5!

This is better than 13...dxe5 14 ♗xe5 ♕a5 15 ♖h3, when again White is slightly better – Kotronias.

14 ♖h3 ♘d7 15 ♔b1 ♘c5 16 h5 0-0-0!?

16...0-0 is also possible, but after 17 ♕e3 ♔h7 Black's king position is none too safe.

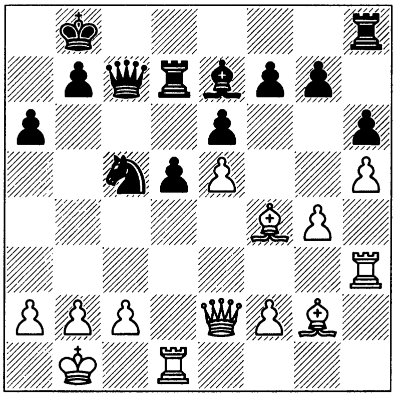
17 ♘e2 ♗b5!?

I wanted to get rid of my 'bad' bishop, but there was also nothing wrong with 17...♔b8 18 ♘d4 ♗d7.

18 g4!

According to Kotronias, 18 ♖c3 fails to 18...♗c4! (18...♔b8 is also good) 19 b3 ♘e4 20 bxc4 ♗b4! with a very strong attack. White could have tried 18 ♘d4 ♗xf1 19 ♕xf1, but after 19...♔b8 Black has no problems.

18...♔b8 19 ♗g2 ♗xe2 20 ♕xe2 ♖d7!



At first I had a generous respect for the white bishop pair, but then I realized that Black has enough counterplay along the c-file, and as a result perhaps even has the better prospects.

21 ♖d4

White plans c3-c4, which is not so good immediately on account of ...d5-d4, but he will not achieve this aim. Preferable was 21 b3, intending ♗c1-b2.

21...♖c8 22 ♖c3

22 c4 is strongly answered by 22...♗g5! – Kotronias.

22...♕d8 23 a4!?

Weakening the king's position. It was better to play 23 ♗g3 b5 24 f4, when Black is only slightly better.

23...♖dc7 24 ♗g3 ♕e8! 25 b3 ♖c6!

Black has improved the placing of his pieces to the maximum, whereas White has been unable to attempt anything active.

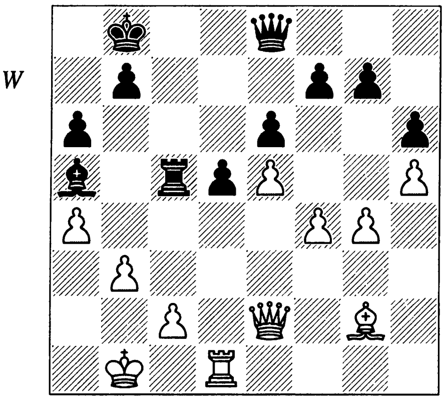
26 f4 ♗d8 27 ♗f2 ♗b6!

This is much better than 27...♗a5 28 ♖h3, after which White can play 29 c4! Now ...♘e4 is threatened.

28 ♖d1 ♗a5

This is the difference to the previous variation. After the rook has been driven away from d4 the a4 point is assailable. If now 29 ♖h3 then 29...♘xa4! 30 c4 (or 30 bxa4 ♖xc2 31 ♕xc2 ♖xc2 32 ♔xc2 ♕xa4+ winning) 30...♖xc4 31 bxc4 ♖xc4, and White has no defence against the twin threats of ...♕b5+ and ...♘c3+, for example 32 ♖dd3 ♕b5+ 33 ♖b3 ♖c1+ 34 ♔xc1 ♕xe2 and wins.

29 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 30 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 *(D)*



In spite of the reduced material Black has the better prospects. His pieces stand more actively, the opposite-coloured bishops favour him, and he can also attack the enemy king on the dark squares (...♗c3 in conjunction with a possible sacrifice on a4 and a check on the b-file). For this reason White should now have walked his king towards the centre (31 ♖d3 ♗c3 32 ♔c1!?, with only a slight minus), but he lost patience ...

31 c4? dxc4 32 ♕e4 ♖c7 33 ♖c1

There is nothing better.

33...♕d7!?

33...c3 would probably also have won, but I was looking for a forcing solution.

34 ♖xc4 ♕d1+ 35 ♔b2 ♕d2+

After 35...♖d7 36 ♖c1! things are not so clear.

36 ♕c2?

This loses, but Black would also have won eventually after 36 ♔b1 ♗c3 37 ♕c2 ♖xc4, for example 38 bxc4 (38 ♕xd2 makes no difference: 38...♗xd2 39 bxc4 ♗xf4 40 ♗e4 ♔c7! 41 ♗h7 ♔d7 42 ♗e4 b6 and Black wins) 38...♕d4 with a clear endgame advantage.

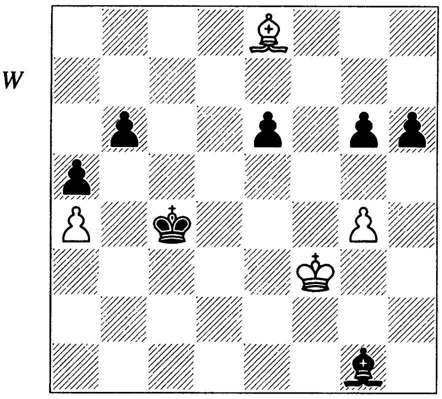
36...♖xc4 37 ♕xd2

Or 37 bxc4 ♕xf4 with a won game.

37...♗xd2 38 bxc4 ♗xf4 39 ♗e4 ♗xe5+ 40 ♔c2 ♔c7

Black is certainly winning, but I could not find the most accurate plan before the time control at move 50.

41 ♔d3 b6 42 ♗h7 ♔d6 43 ♗e4 ♗h2 44 ♔e3 ♗g1+ 45 ♔f3 ♔c5 46 ♗b7 a5 47 ♗a6 ♔d4 48 ♗b5 g5? 49 hxg6 fxg6 50 ♗e8 ♔xc4



51 ♔e4?

White could and should have waited with this move. The natural 51 ♗xg6 would have made my task more difficult. The ending after 51...b5 52 axb5 ♔xb5 53 ♗f7 e5 54 ♔e4 should be a draw, but 51...♔d4! wins very attractively through a series of zugzwangs: 52 ♗f7 e5 53 ♗g6

♗e3 54 ♗e4 ♗g5 55 ♗c6 ♗e7 56 ♗b5 ♗d6 57 ♗c6 ♗c7 (the first zugzwang) 58 ♗b5 (or 58 ♗e4 b5 59 axb5 a4 winning) 58...e4+ 59 ♔e2 ♗d6 60 ♗c6 ♔e5 61 ♔e3 ♗c5+ 62 ♔e2 ♔f4 63 ♗d7 e3 (the second zugzwang) 64 ♗e6 (on 64 ♔e1 there follows 64...♔f3, and the threat of...♗c3+ forces White to play ♗c6+, after which he loses the g4 pawn) 64...b5 65 axb5 a4 66 ♗f5 a3 67 ♗e6 ♗b6 (the third zugzwang) 68 ♔e1 ♔f3 (the g4 pawn is again lost).

51...♔b4

Now Kotronias sealed, but the rest can be understood without much commentary.

52 ♗xg6 ♔xa4 53 ♗f7 b5 54 ♗xe6 ♔a3 55 ♔d5 a4 56 ♔c6 b4 57 ♔b5 b3 58 ♗f5 b2 59 ♗c2 ♗f2 60 ♔a5 ♗e1+ 61 ♔b5 ♗d2 62 ♗f5 ♔b3 63 ♗e6+ ♔c3 64 ♗a2 a3 65 ♔a4 b1♕ 0-1

66 ♗xb1 is met by 66...♔b2.

Game 47

Shirov – Gelfand

Chalkidiki 1993

The game was annotated in September 1993 and was published in the German magazine *Schach 64.*

The system of the Chalkidiki tournament was so strange that I find it hard to explain to readers. I can only mention that finally I had to play Boris in four games, but since I lost both games to him in the quadrangular tournament, Boris was bound to be the tournament winner independent of the result of the last two games. I won one game and drew the other, so I could claim a moral victory because my total score (there were also Adams and Kotronias in the event) was half a point more than Boris'.

I should mention that apart from the strange system, the tournament was well organized and for me it was a unique experience of combining tournament chess with beach relaxation.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 ♘e1 ♘d7 10 ♗e3

Viktor Korchnoi has often played this way, but it was the first time that this move had occurred in my own tournament practice.

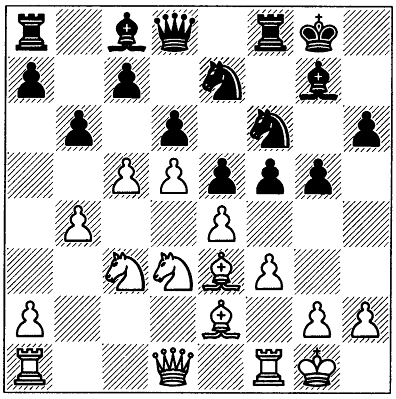
10...f5 11 f3 h6

This plan was first tried in Korchnoi-Yurtayev, Manila Olympiad 1992. Yurtayev's idea appears dubious, but I would not like to pass final judgement on it.

12 ♘d3 b6

12...g5 13 c5 ♘f6 14 ♖c1! ♘g6 15 cxd6 cxd6 16 ♘b5! is clearly better for White, as 17 ♘c7 ♖b8 18 ♗xa7 is threatened.

13 b4 g5 14 c5 ♘f6



15 ♖c1!

An important improvement. Against Yurtayev, Korchnoi played 15 cxd6 cxd6 16 b5 ♘g6 17 ♘b4 ♘f4 18 ♘c6 ♕e8, when Black stood well. However, worth considering is 15 ♘f2 f4 16 ♗d2, reaching a well-known type of position, but with the moves b2-b4 and ...b7-b6 inserted. This favours White, as it is now easier for him to open up the queenside.

15...♘g6

Also good for White are 15...♗d7 16 ♘f2 and 15...g4 16 fxg4!; but 15...♖f7 comes into consideration.

16 exf5!

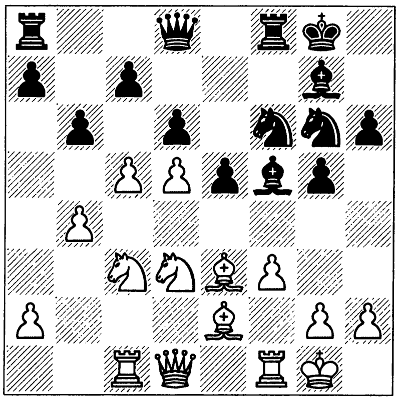
Only so! Both 16 ♘f2 ♘f4 and 16 cxd6 cxd6 17 exf5 ♘e7 18 g4 ♘exd5 lead to unclear play.

16...♗xf5

16...♘e7 fails to 17 g4 ♘exd5 18 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♕b3 c6 (19...♗b7 20 c6 and

19...dxc5? 20 ♖fd1 c6 21 bxc5 both win for White) 20 cxd6 with a big advantage for White.

W



17 cxd6 cxd6

If 17...♕xd6 then 18 ♘b5 ♕d7 19 ♘xc7 ♖ac8 20 ♕b3! is very good for White.

18 ♘f2 ♘f4 19 ♗xf4 exf4 20 ♗d3 ♘e8?

After this White's advantage becomes clear. 20...♕d7 is also no good due to 21 ♗xf5 (21 ♕c2!?) 21...♕xf5 22 ♘fe4, so Black should have tried 20...♗d7, even though after 21 ♗g6! I still like White's position. Of course, things are much less clear then.

21 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 22 ♕d3 ♕d7

After 22...♖f7 23 ♘fe4 White also has a clear advantage.

23 ♘ce4 ♘c7

Now 24 ♖fd1 can be met by 24...♖d8!

24 ♖c6! ♘xd5

Of course not 24...♖xd5?? 25 ♖xc7.

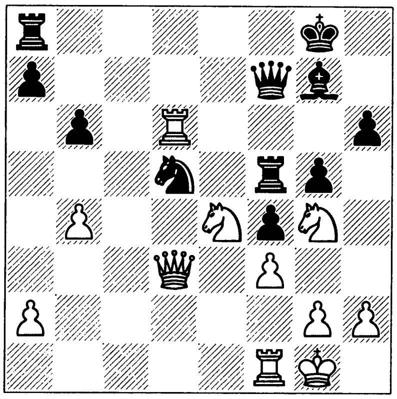
25 ♖xd6 ♕f7 26 ♘g4! *(D)*

26...♘e3

The best chance. Black's position is hopeless after 26...♘xb4 27 ♕d2 h5 28 ♘h6+ ♗xh6 29 ♖xh6 a5 30 ♕d4 ♕g7, and not now 31 ♕xb6 because of 31...♖a6!, but 31 ♕d6 with a clear advantage in view of the threats 32 ♖g6 and 32 ♘f6+. If 31...♕f8 then 32 a3 ♕xd6 (not 32...♘d5 33 ♕g6+ ♕g7 34 ♕xf5 ♕xh6 35 ♕xd5+) 33 ♘xd6 ♖d5 34 axb4 ♔g7 35 ♖e6 axb4 36 ♘e4 with a won ending.

27 ♘xh6+ ♗xh6 28 ♖xh6 ♘xf1

B



After 28...♕xa2 29 ♘f6+ ♔f8 (29...♖xf6 30 ♕h7+) 30 ♕d6+ ♔g7 31 ♕d7+ Black is mated.

29 ♘d6 ♖d5?

Black does not want to be tortured in a hopeless ending after 29...♕d5 30 ♕xf5 ♕xf5 31 ♘xf5 ♘d2 32 ♖g6+, so he chooses a quick death.

30 ♖h8+ ♔g7 31 ♕h7+ 1-0

Game 48

Murey – Shirov

Luxembourg (European Club Cup) 1993

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 58*.

Grandmaster Yakov Murey has some incredibly original ideas, especially in the openings. The most famous of these is probably 4...♘c6 (after 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 d4 ♘xe4 4 ♗d3). Imagine – to find a novelty on only the fourth move in a position which has occurred countless times before! His creativity is definitely exceptional.

1 c4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♘c3 f5 4 g3 ♘f6 5 d4 e4 6 ♘h4!?

What is this? The knight goes to the edge of the board, in violation of the classical rules! I thought that it should be immediately refuted ...

6...g6!?

A new move. White's idea can be seen in the line 6...♗e7 7 ♗h3! g6 8 0-0, intending 9 f3, with a slight advantage, as Murey played a very long time ago.

7 ♗g5! ♗g7 8 ♕d2 0-0

Every opening move was taking me a lot of time because I could not (and still cannot) understand what was going on. The natural 8...h6? is wrong because of 9 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 10 ♘d5 ♕f7 11 ♘xg6.

9 f3! ♕e8

This, I believe, is a mistake. I rejected 9...exf3 because I didn't like the position after 10 ♘xf3 ♕e8?! 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 ♗g2, with the idea of 13 0-0, followed by ♖ae1 and e2-e4. But what would have been wrong with 10...b6 instead of 10...♕e8? This would have been the right way to challenge Murey's creative play.

10 ♗g2 exf3

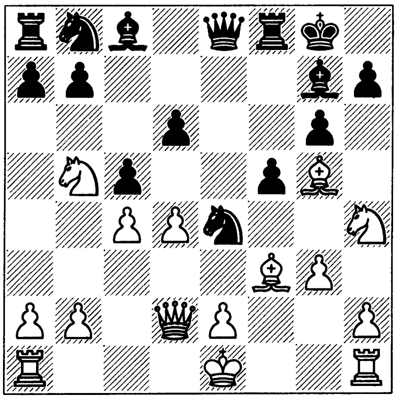
Now this is too late. 10...♕f7!? was an interesting alternative.

11 ♗xf3 c5

Continuing with my aggressive intentions and putting the game into high-risk mode. However, I already don't see a good alternative, for example 11...♘c6?! 12 0-0-0 ♘e4 13 ♗xe4 fxe4 14 ♗h6!, when White is on top.

12 ♘b5! ♘e4!

There is nothing else.



13 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 14 ♘f3!

This is the move that I had underestimated, counting mainly on 14 0-0-0? cxd4 15 ♘c7 ♗e6 16 ♕d3 (16 ♘xa8? ♖c8 17 b3 ♗xc4 wins for Black) 16...♗f7 17 ♕xe4 fxe4 18 ♘xa8 ♘a6 with an excellent initiative for the sacrificed rook. After I replied to 14 ♘f3 my situation became especially dangerous since I already had less than half an hour to reach move 40 and in such a complicated position this is not enough. Besides, my opponent continued playing impressively quickly.

14...cxd4 15 ♘c7 ♘a6

Probably the only way to create real counter-chances. The lines 15...f4? 16 0-0 fxg3 17 hxg3 ♗h3 18 ♖f2 and 15...♗e6 16 ♘xa8 ♗xc4? (intending ...d4-d3) 17 ♔f2 ♘a6 18 ♖hc1! (18 ♖ac1? ♗xa2 19 ♘c7 ♘c5 offers Black compensation) 18...b5 19 b3 would have been completely disastrous.

16 ♘xa8 ♗d7!

The right place for the bishop as he can move to c6 one day. 16...♗e6? 17 ♖c1 ♖xa8 18 0-0, with ideas of 19 ♗h6 or 19 ♗f4, looks bad for Black.

17 ♗h6!?

Is this the end? I almost convinced myself that it was, but then found a possible chance.

17...♗xh6 18 ♕xh6 d3 19 0-0 dxe2 20 ♖f2 f4!

20...♖xa8? 21 ♖e1 loses at once. With the text Black offers White an 'easy win' which is in fact just an illusion.

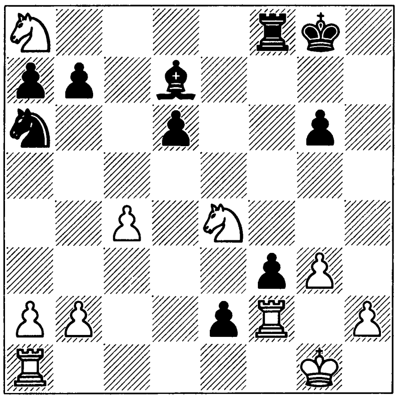
21 ♕xh7+!?

It's difficult to resist such a move, but in fact White doesn't gain an advantage with it. Another try would have been Murey's post-mortem suggestion 21 ♖e1!? fxg3 22 hxg3 ♖xf3 23 ♖exe2, but I believe that Black gets reasonable compensation for the exchange in the endgame arising after 23...♕d4! 24 ♕h4 (24 ♕g5 ♗c6! is unclear) 24...♕xh4 25 gxh4 ♖g3+ 26 ♖g2 ♖h3!

21...♔xh7 22 ♘g5+ ♔g8! 23 ♘xe4 f3 *(D)*

A rook down, with less than ten minutes for 17 moves, but still alive – this was what I more or less was feeling by this point. My opponent was becoming visibly frustrated that the game was not yet won

W



and played the rest of the game without inspiration. It's a pity that there were still no practical winning chances for myself.

24 ♘c3

If 24 ♘d2 then 24...♗c6, with the idea of 25...b6, and 24 ♘xd6 can also be answered by 24...♗c6, intending 25...♖d8!

24...♖e8!

Very precise. 24...♗c6 25 ♘xe2 fxe2 26 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 27 ♔f2 b6 28 ♘xb6 axb6 29 ♔xe2 would have been really unpleasant for Black.

25 ♖e1 ♗c6 26 ♘d5

During the game I feared 26 a3!? b6 27 ♘xb6 axb6 28 b4, but then I found that after 28...♖e3! 29 b5 (29 ♘xe2 b5!) 29...♗a8!! Black is winning!

26...♗xd5 27 cxd5 ♖e3! 28 a3 b5

Time-trouble is already influencing the play. The easiest way to make a draw would have been 28...♖d3 29 ♖exe2 (29 ♖xf3? ♖xf3 30 ♖xe2 ♖f8 and takes on a8) 29...fxe2 30 ♖xe2 ♖xd5.

29 g4!? b4 *(D)*

30 h4

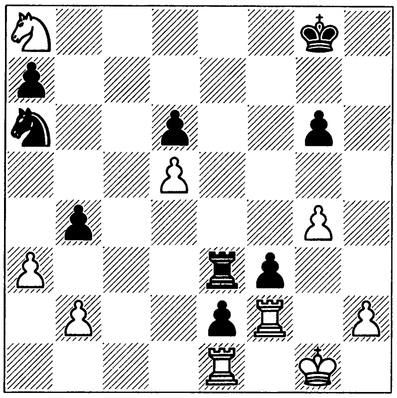
30 axb4 ♘xb4 31 ♘c7 would have forced me to find the only drawing line (with my flag hanging of course!): 31...♘c2! 32 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 33 ♖xe2 ♘e3 34 ♖f2 ♖xf2 35 ♔xf2 ♘xg4+.

30...bxa3 31 bxa3 ♖xa3 32 ♔h2 ♘b4 33 ♘c7 ♘d3 34 ♖exe2

It is never too late to blunder. 34 ♖xf3?? ♘xe1 35 ♖xa3 ♘c2 would even lose.

34...fxe2 35 ♖xe2 ♘e5 36 ♖e4 ♘f3+ 37 ♔g2 ♘xh4+ 38 ♔f2

W



Black is now a pawn up, but unfortunately his king is too passive to hope for a win.

38...♖a2+ 39 ♔g3 g5 40 ♘b5

40 ♖e6 would have been simpler.

40...♖g2+ 41 ♔h3 ♖d2 42 ♘xd6 ♖xd5 43 ♖e8+ ♔g7 44 ♘e4 a5 45 ♔g3 ♘g6 46 ♖a8 ♘e7 47 ♔f3 ♖b5 48 ♘d6 ♖b3+ 49 ♔e4 ♖b4+ 50 ♔e5 ♖b1 51 ♘c4! ♖b4 ½-½

Draw and ... Hamburg lost the knock-out match by half a point (had I won it would have been the opposite result).

This was the last game I played for Hamburg before switching to Berlin; I would have relished a farewell win. However, the game itself was very enjoyable.

Game 49
Shirov – Kramnik
Lucerne 1993

These annotations were made in November 1993 and first appeared in *New in Chess Magazine*.

In the World Team Championship Latvia performed well in the first half but then things went wrong. In the last round we still had a chance for an honourable place if we could beat Russia 3-1. At one moment it seemed possible, but the miracle didn't happen – the result was 2-2 and Latvia finished sixth.

For me it was the opposite story. I played poorly at started with just 1½ out of 4. Then I recovered completely and won three interesting games. The present game was important to prove that at that time I was one of the elite players. I was on my way to the 3rd position in the rating list which I obtained clearly half a year later ... just for a while.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6

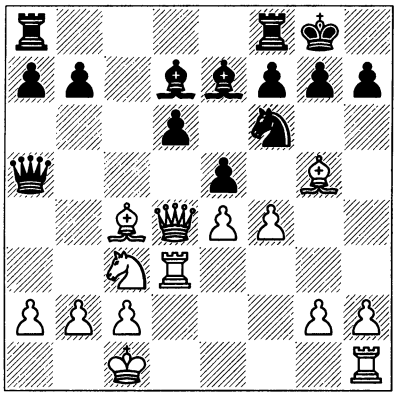
Like yours truly, Kramnik always plays the Rauzer with Black. However, the line he chose in this game was not one that I had expected.

6 ♗g5 e6 7 ♕d2 ♗e7 8 0-0-0 0-0 9 f4 ♘xd4 10 ♕xd4 ♕a5 11 ♗c4 ♗d7 12 ♖d3!

This move, first played by Shabalov against Inkiov in Gausdal in January 1991, has not proved popular.

12...e5

[AS – Two months later, in Belgrade 1993, Kramnik came up with a new move 12...♖ad8! His games in that event against Kotronias and Hodgson, as well as the game Shirov-Kramnik in Groningen (December 1993) sent White back to the drawing board.]



13 ♕e3!

A novelty which Vasilios Kotronias had analysed deeply and shown me at Linares in 1993, where he was my second. 13 ♕g1, which was played in Lanka-Kotronias, Gausdal, July 1991, is nothing like as good.

13...♖ac8 14 ♗b3 ♗e6

These two moves took Kramnik more than an hour. Later he told me that he had been calculating 14...♖xc3 15 ♖xc3 (in my opinion 15 bxc3 is not bad either) 15...h6, but had decided that after 16 fxe5! ♘g4 17 ♗xe7 ♘xe3 18 ♖xe3 ♕xe5 19 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 Black stands worse. Yet is not easy for White to prove that he has serious winning chances in this line.

15 ♗xe6 exf4

The only move, since 15...fxe6 16 ♕h3 ♔f7 17 f5 is just bad for Black.

16 ♗xf4

For a while I considered 16 ♕h3?! ♖xc3 17 ♖xc3 ♕xg5, but then Black has no problems.

16...fxe6 17 ♕h3 ♔f7

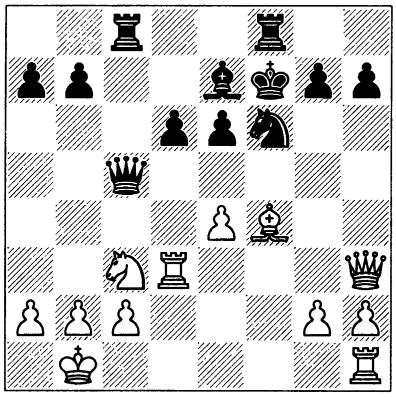
Again the only move. Now it seems that White has the advantage, but he has to be very energetic to prevent Black from consolidating.

18 ♔b1

Not, of course, 18 ♗xd6?? ♖xc3 19 bxc3 ♗xd6 20 ♖xd6 ♕a3+.

18...♕c5?!

Now White's edge is more or less clear. After 18...♖c6 I was going to play 19 ♘d5!? exd5 20 exd5 ♘xd5 21 ♗d2!, but I was not sure about anything in this position.



19 g4!

I could have won a pawn with 19 ♗e3 ♕e5 20 ♗d4 ♕g5 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 ♖xd6, but after 22...♖fe8 23 ♖f1 ♕e5 Black has sufficient compensation.

19...h6

Yet again the only move.

20 ♗e3 ♕e5 21 ♗d4!?

Here I wanted to play 21 ♖g1, but after 21...♖c4! 22 g5 ♘xe4 the position is unclear. Besides the text, 21 ♗xa7!? deserved serious attention, since 21...♖c4 can be met by 22 b3 ♖b4 23 a3. Frankly, I was rather exhausted at the end of the tournament, so I decided to make logical moves without much calculation.

21...♕g5 22 ♖g1

Now 23 ♗e3 ♕g5 24 g5 is threatened and 22...♖c4 can still be met by 23 e5! dxe5 24 ♗e3 ♕g6 25 g5 with the initiative for a pawn.

22...♘d7 23 ♗e3 ♕g6 24 g5!

A direct attack is now the only way to retain the advantage.

23...hxg5 25 ♗xg5!

25 ♘b5 did not seem convincing in view of 25...♔g8.

25...♗xg5 26 ♖xd6 ♘c5

Of course 26...♔e7 loses to 27 ♖xg5, but 26...♖fd8 is not easy to refute. However, my analysis convinced me that after 27 ♕g3! ♘f6 (27...♘c5? 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♕c7+ ♘d7 30 h4 wins for White) 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 h4 ♘xe4 30 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 31 ♕xg5 ♕d4 (and not 31...♖g8? 32 ♖f1+ ♔e8 33 ♖d1) 32 ♕g6+ ♔g8 33 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 34 ♕e1 Black has no real compensation for the pawn.

27 ♕g4 ♔g8 28 h4 ♖f4

I must admit to having overlooked this move when playing 24 g5, but White is still better.

29 ♕xg5 ♕xg5 30 hxg5 ♖cf8 *(D)*

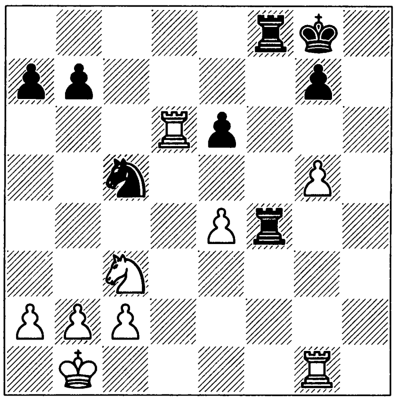
30...♘xe4 31 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 32 ♖d7! is very promising for White, e.g. 32...♖e2 33 ♖xb7 ♖cxc2 34 g6! and White wins.

31 b4?

Quite a weak move. After 31 b3! ♘xe4 32 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 33 g6! White has excellent winning chances.

31...♘xe4 32 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 33 a3 ♔h7?

With this bad move Kramnik offered a draw. After 33...g6! White would still have retained slight hopes for a win, although a draw would have been the most likely outcome.



34 ♖d7

Perhaps 34 g6+ ♔h6 35 ♖d7 would have been more precise.

34...♔g6 35 ♖xb7 a5 36 ♔b2 ♖ff4 37 ♔b3?

Now, while writing these annotations, I realize that 37 bxa5 gives White a decisive advantage.

37...♖e3+ 38 ♔a4 ♖ff3?

Black's only chance was to defend the position after 38...axb4 39 axb4 ♖c3 40 ♖g2 ♖fc4 41 ♖e2 ♖xc2 42 ♖xe6+ ♔xg5 43 ♖xg7+, although White is still clearly on top.

39 ♔xa5 ♖xa3+ 40 ♔b6 ♖ac3 41 ♖e1

At the time I thought that this was the clearest way to win, but in fact there are still some snags. Now I would prefer 41 ♖c7 ♖xc7 42 ♔xc7 ♖c3+ 43 ♔d7 ♖xc2 44 ♖b1! and Black's position is hopeless, for example 44...♔f7 45 g6+! ♔xg6 46 b5 ♔f7 47 b6 ♖d2+ 48 ♔c6 ♖c2+ 49 ♔b5 (the move that I had missed in my original calculations) 49...♖c8 50 b7 followed by 51 ♔c6 and wins.

41...♔xg5 42 ♖xg7+ ♔f6 43 ♖c7! e5 *(D)*

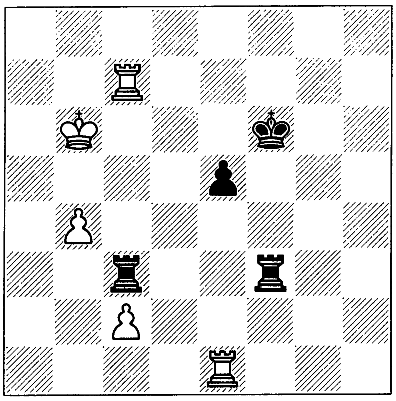
43...♖xc7 44 ♔xc7 ♔e7 (or 44...♖c3+ 45 ♔d6) 45 ♖e5 ♖f5 46 ♖e4 is an easy win for White.

44 b5 ♖xc7

I had expected 44...♔e6 and was going to play 45 ♖e2 anyway. If then 45...♔d5, 46 ♖d2+ ♔e6 47 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 48 ♔a5 is decisive.

45 ♔xc7 ♔e6

W



Of course 45...♖c3+ 46 ♔d6 ♖xc2 47 ♖xe5 is lost for Black.

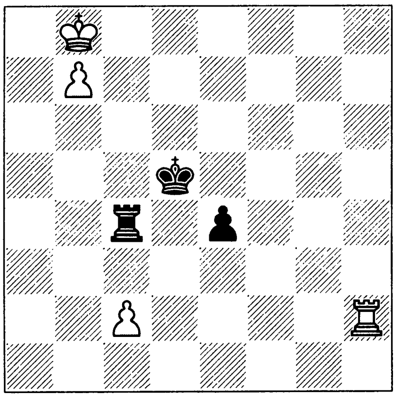
46 ♖e2 ♖c3+ 47 ♔b8 ♖c4

The most logical line of resistance would have been 47...♔d5 48 b6 e4 49 b7 e3 50 ♖h2 (not 50 ♔a7? ♔c6!) 50...♔c6 51 ♖h6+ ♔b5 (or 51...♔d7 52 ♔a7 ♖a3+ 53 ♔b6) 52 ♖e6 and White wins.

48 b6 e4 49 b7 ♔d5 50 ♖h2

This is the killer, whereas 50 ♖d2+? ♔c6 51 ♖h2 e3 52 ♖h6+? ♔d5 53 ♔a7? would have suddenly led to a draw after 53...e2 54 b8♕ ♖a4+! 55 ♔b7 (or 55 ♖a6 ♖xa6+ 56 ♔xa6 e1♕) 55...♖b4+ 56 ♖b6 e1♕!! (not 56...♖xb6+ 57 ♔xb6 e1♕ 58 ♕d8+ ♔c4 59 ♕d3+ ♔b4 60 ♕b3 mate) 57 ♕d6+ ♔c4, etc.

B



50...e3

If 50...♔d4 then 51 ♔a7 ♖a4+ 52 ♔b6 ♖b4+ 53 ♔c6 ♖c4+ 54 ♔b5 and White wins.

51 ♔a7 ♖a4+ 52 ♔b6 ♖b4+ 53 ♔c7 ♖c4+ 54 ♔d7 1-0

Here Kramnik resigned due to 54...♖b4 55 ♖h5+ and 56 ♖h4+.

In my previous encounter with Vladimir I had won despite 'being a rook down' according to various magazines (particularly *New in Chess*). Well, this time I was more careful with my rooks.

[AS – But not at Linares 1994!]

Game 50

Shirov – Chernin

Groningen 1993

These annotations were made in January 1994 and have been published in various magazines.

Sacrifices on h5, d5 and f5 in a row and the rook manoeuvre ... some people have expressed the opinion that this is my best game. I agree it is good but do not consider it my finest.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♗d7

I am always happy to play this system as White, since Black loses some time compared to the Caro-Kann.

5 ♘f3 ♗c6 6 ♗d3 ♘d7 7 0-0 ♘gf6 8 ♘g3

Nowadays 8 ♘eg5 is more popular, but I can see nothing wrong with simple development.

8...♗e7 9 b3 0-0 10 ♗b2 ♗xf3?!

In my opinion it is not yet necessary to give up the bishop.

11 ♕xf3 c6 12 c4 ♖e8 13 ♖fe1 ♗f8

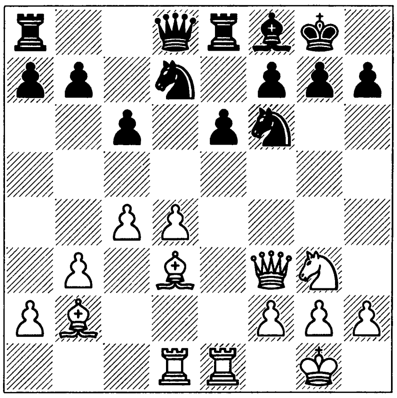
Hübner played 13...♘f8 against me at Munich in 1993, but after 14 h4! White stood better.

14 ♖ad1 *(D)*

Another idea would have been 14 ♖e2, followed by 15 ♖ae1, but I consider the text more logical, since the idea is to prevent ...g7-g6.

14...♕a5

After the game Chernin said he did not like 14...g6 because of 15 d5! (note that 15 h4 ♗g7 16 h5 ♕a5 is quite okay for Black)



15...cxd5 (15...exd5 16 ♖xe8 ♘xe8 17 cxd5 is very attractive for White) 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 17 ♗c4. Now 17...♘7b6 just loses because of 18 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 (19...exd5 20 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 21 ♕f6 and wins) 20 ♕f6 e5 21 ♖xe5 ♕c6! 22 ♖e6! ♕c1+ 23 ♗xc1 ♖xe6 24 ♕c3, so Black must play 17...♗g7; but after 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♗xd5 exd5 20 ♕xd5 his position is terrible.

15 ♗b1 g6

After 15...♖ac8 or 15...♖ad8 I would also have played 16 h4 with at least a slight edge.

16 h4! ♗g7

During the game I saw no clear way of meeting 16...h5, since 17 ♘e4 ♘xe4 18 ♖xe4 ♗g7, with the idea of 19 g4?! f5! is fine for Black. But now I think that 17 ♗c3! ♗b4 (otherwise 18 d5!) 18 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 19 ♘e4! yields White a big advantage.

17 ♗c3! ♕c7 18 h5 b5 19 h6?

The right idea but in the wrong move order. Correct was 19 ♗d2!, intending 20 h6! ♗h8 21 ♗g5 with a clear advantage. If Black plays, e.g. 19...bxc4 20 bxc4 e5, then after 21 h6 ♗h8 22 dxe5 ♘xe5 23 ♕f4 ♖e6 24 ♖e2 ♖ae8 25 ♖de1 White holds the edge.

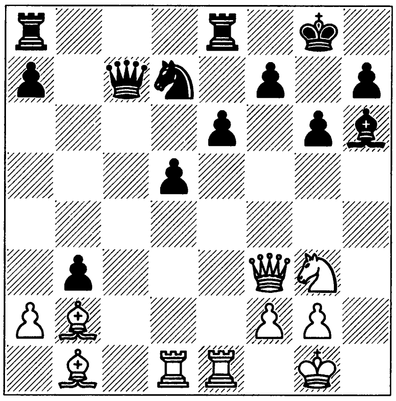
19...♗xh6!

I had imagined that this was impossible, and only now realized that Chernin would get three pawns for the piece.

20 d5 cxd5 21 ♗xf6 bxc4?

Chernin misses his only opportunity to equalize. After 21...♘xf6 22 ♕xf6 bxc4 23 ♕h4 ♗f4! 24 ♘e2 (24 bxc4 ♗xg3 25 fxg3 dxc4 is equal) 24...♗e5 25 bxc4 dxc4 White has no advantage. Trying to take things easy suddenly allows White a powerful attack.

22 ♗b2! cxb3?!



Although White would have stood better after 22...♗g7 23 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 24 ♕c3+, Black should have gone in for this. The rest of the game gave me some aesthetic pleasure, which is not often the case in chess.

23 ♘h5!! f5

Both 23...gxh5 24 ♕xh5 ♕f4 25 ♗c1 ♘f6 26 ♕h3 and 23...bxa2 24 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 25 ♕xf6 e5 26 ♖xe5 are hopeless. Tougher resistance would have been offered by 23...♗g5 24 ♕g4 ♕d8 25 axb3; nevertheless, White should still win.

24 ♖xd5! gxh5

There is no choice as 24...exd5 is met by 25 ♕xd5+ ♔f8 26 ♗a3+.

25 ♖xf5! ♘f8

25...exf5 26 ♕d5+ ♔f8 27 ♕xf5+ ♔g8 28 ♕xh7+ and the game is over.

26 ♖xh5 bxa2 27 ♗xa2 ♗g7 28 ♕g4!

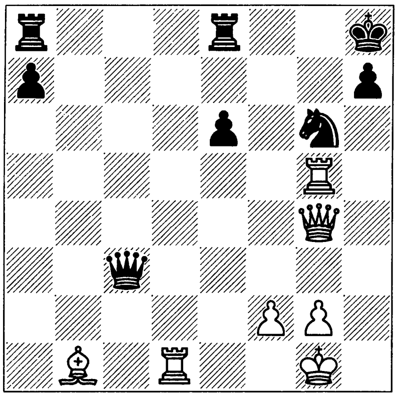
The best way. 28 ♖g5 ♘g6 29 ♖xe6 ♔h8 is not so clear.

28...♔h8 29 ♗xg7+ ♕xg7 30 ♖g5 ♘g6 31 ♗b1 ♕c3 32 ♖d1 *(D)*

32...♕f6?!

32...♖g8 would probably have caused me some problems (I had about eight minutes left at this stage), but during the post-mortem analysis we found that 33

B



♕h5 ♘f8 34 ♖d7!! (suggested by Zoltan Ribli) 34...♕c1+ 35 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 36 ♖g3 ♖xg3 37 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 38 fxg3 wins. Another idea is 33 ♖xg6!? (33 ♗xg6? ♕f6 is unclear) 33...♖xg6 (33...hxg6 34 ♕h4+ ♔g7 35 ♖d7+) 34 ♗xg6 ♖g8 35 ♕xe6 hxg6 (35...♖xg6 36 ♖d8+ ♔g7 37 ♕e7+ ♔h6 38 ♕h4+, etc.) 36 g4!? with a clear plus.

33 ♖d7!

Now it's all over.

33...♖e7 34 ♖xe7 ♕xe7

Not 34...♘xe7? 35 ♕e4 and White wins immediately.

35 ♗xg6 ♖g8 36 ♕d4+ ♖g7

It is a pity that the game did not finish with 36...♕g7 37 ♖h5.

37 ♖h5 e5 1-0

Black resigned, not waiting for the obvious 38 ♖xe5.

[AS – I especially enjoyed this game because of the way White's rook destroyed Black's defences.]

Game 51
J. Polgar – Shirov
Linares 1994

This annotations are based on my notes published in *Informator 60*.

This was the best tournament in my career (so far), but I started with ½/3. Fortunately it didn't kill my fighting spirit and I won the next four games. This one is the last in the series. Despite shaky play after that, my luck held and I somehow made it.

Something to remember.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3 c6 4 ♘f3 d6 5 ♗g5!?

Quite an interesting set-up against the Pirc Defence. Eight months after this game I played it myself against David Norwood (Bundesliga 1994/95).

5...♕b6!?

Norwood continued 5...♗g4.

6 ♖b1

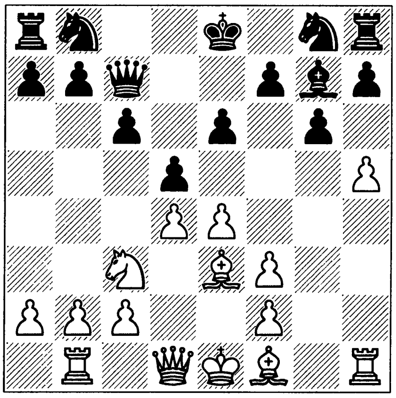
I was very surprised by this move. 6 a3 ♗g4 7 ♗e3 ♘d7 would also have been fine for Black, but I was completely sure that with her attacking style Judit was going to sacrifice a pawn with 6 ♕d2!? ♕xb2 7 ♖b1 ♕a3 8 ♗d3. Black might then continue 8...h6 9 ♗e3 ♘f6 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 h3 ♕a5 with an unclear game.

6...♗g4 7 ♗e3 ♗xf3 8 gxf3 ♕c7

Curiously enough Judit repeated the same line against me in a blindfold game in Monaco in 1996. Unable to remember our previous encounter properly I continued 8...♘d7 and won again.

9 h4 e6! 10 h5 d5

W



11 ♕d2

I was more afraid of 11 ♕e2, a direct attempt to use White's lead in development. But I think that Black is still solid after the precise 11...♘f6! (11...♘e7?! leaves Black's position too passive after 12 h6 ♗f8 13 ♗h3 ♘d7 14 ♗g5!) 12 h6 ♗f8 13 ♗g5 ♗e7, as 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 exd5 cxd5

16 ♘xd5 ♕a5+ 17 ♘c3 ♗xd4 18 ♕b5+ ♘c6! is good for him.

11...♘d7 12 b4

12 exd5 exd5 13 ♗f4 ♕b6 14 ♕e3+ looks dangerous but can be answered by 14...♘e7, since 15 ♗d6 0-0!! 16 ♗xe7 ♖fe8 is playable for Black, for example 17 ♘e2 (17 hxg6 ♕xd4! allows Black to win back the piece with a strong position) 17...♗f8 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♗c5 ♘xc5 20 dxc5 ♗xc5 21 ♕h6 ♗d4 22 ♔d1 ♗g7 23 ♕h4 ♖e5! with an initiative to compensate for White's extra piece.

12...♘gf6 13 h6!? ♗f8 14 ♗f4 ♕d8?!

Although Black is not worse after this move, he certainly becomes very passive. 14...e5 was called for, as Black needs to open the centre to show that White's position is vulnerable and full of weaknesses. White then has to try to swap some pieces, for example 15 dxe5 ♘xe5 16 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 17 f4 ♕e6 18 e5 and after 18...♘e4 (other knight moves might also be interesting) 19 ♘xe4 dxe4 20 ♗h3 ♕d5 21 c4! ♕xd2+ 22 ♔xd2 a5!? (22...♗xh6 23 ♔e3 f5 24 exf6 ♔f7 25 ♗g4 ♗f8 is also okay for Black) 23 bxa5 ♗c5! 24 ♖xb7 0-0 the position should be about equal.

15 ♗d3

The plan chosen by Judit seems too slow and Black soon gets the upper hand. Critical was 15 ♗e2!, when Black can choose between

a) 15...♗e7 16 e5 ♘g8 (not 16...♘h5? 17 ♗e3 threatening 18 f4) 17 ♘d1 b5 with a slow but solid plan of ...♗f8 and ...♘e7; or

b) 15...♘b6 16 a4 ♗e7 17 a5 ♘c8 which seems equal to me.

15...♗e7 16 ♘e2?!

Now 16 e5 would have been less strong but still preferable to the text-move. I intended to reply 16...♘h5 17 ♗e3 ♘xe5! 18 dxe5 d4 with an equal position after 19 ♘e2 (or 19 ♘e4 dxe3 20 fxe3) 19...dxe3 20 ♕xe3.

16...0-0 17 c3 b5!

Here, holding a slight advantage, I began feeling very ambitious, but as usual I had to be prepared for a fight against the clock.

18 ♔f1 a5 19 a3 ♘b6 20 ♖e1 ♘e8!?

A natural plan but one that allows White some curious counterplay for which Judit, of course, immediately goes. Another possibility would have been 20...axb4 21 axb4 ♖a3!?, intending 22...♕a8.

21 ♗e5 ♘d6 22 ♗g7! ♘dc4 23 ♕c1

The correct decision as the 'active' 23 ♕f4 would also have been answered by 23...♖e8, when the a3 pawn is hanging.

23...♖e8 24 e5 axb4 25 axb4 ♖a2 26 ♕f4 ♖d2 27 ♗b1 ♘a4!?

Fighting against the bishop on b1.

28 ♔g2 ♘ab2

28...♖xe2 29 ♖xe2 ♘xc3 30 ♖ee1 ♗xb4 would smash White's pawn structure, but allows him a powerful initiative with 31 ♗d3!

29 ♕g4!

Avoiding 29 ♘g3? ♗g5 30 ♕g4 ♘d1! and wins.

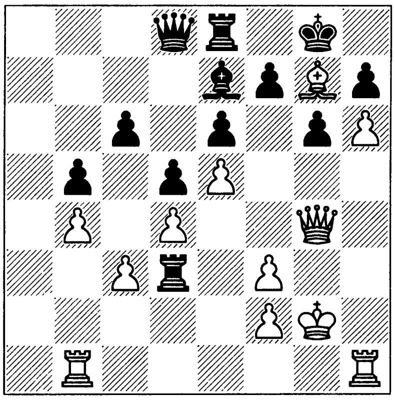
29...♘a3!

The bishop must be taken before it can be sacrificed on g6.

30 ♘f4 ♘xb1 31 ♖xb1 ♘d3 32 ♘xd3

White has to exchange another active piece as 32 ♘h3?! fails to 32...♕a8! 33 ♖a1 ♖a2 34 ♖ad1 ♘b2, with a clear advantage for Black.

32...♖xd3



This is the position I had been aiming for. Black's pawns are still much better but the passivity of some of his pieces make the chances roughly equal. Now White commits hara-kiri.

33 ♖a1?

Giving up one, then another pawn, and not getting anything in return. The right idea was 33 ♖hc1 f5! 34 exf6 ♗xf6 35 ♖a1! with an unclear game.

33...♖xc3 34 ♖a7 ♖c4!

Now Black is winning. White can only hope for time-trouble tricks.

35 ♖ha1 ♖xb4 36 ♕f4 c5 37 ♖xe7!? ♕xe7 38 ♗f6 ♕c7!

To meet 39. ♗g5 with 39...f5.

39 ♖a6 ♖xd4 40 ♕g5 ♖a4 41 ♖d6 ♖aa8 42 ♖c6!?

Beautiful but insufficient. Black also wins after 42 ♗d8 f6 or 42 ♕h4!? ♕b7! 43 ♗d8 f5 44 ♕f6 c4 45 ♖b6 ♕d7 46 ♖d6 ♖axd8 47 ♖xd7 ♖xd7.

42...♕a7!

Not 42...♕xc6?? 43 ♗e7, intending ♕f6 winning.

43 ♗d8

Offering another poisoned piece. The rook sacrifice 43 ♖a6 would now fail to 43...♕xa6 44 ♗e7 f5 45 ♕f6 ♖xe7 46 ♕xe7 ♕a7 winning.

43...f6 44 ♗xf6 c4 45 ♕g4 ♕f7 46 ♕d4 ♖ec8 47 ♕b6 ♖xc6 48 ♕xc6 ♖b8 0-1

Game 52
Kramnik – Shirov
Linares 1994

These annotations were made in March 1994 and have been published in various magazines.

Before this game I was half a point ahead of my opponent, so he had to win. Given the tournament situation, perhaps my opening choice was not the best.

1 ♘f3 d5 2 d4 ♗f5!?

Perhaps this move is not so bad, but it is too experimental to play in such an important game.

3 c4 e6 4 ♘c3 c6 5 ♕b3 ♕b6

[AS – In the Bundesliga in 1995 Kramnik had a very convincing victory over Hertneck in the line 5...♕c7 6 ♗f4 dxc4 7 ♗xc7 cxb3 8 e4 ♗g6 9 a3!, which seems to be critical for today's assessment of the 2...♗f5 variation. However, Hertneck's subsequent play can be improved upon.]

6 c5 ♕c7

The other way, 6...♕xb3 7 axb3 ♘a6 is dubious in view of 8 ♖a4!

7 ♗f4 ♕c8 8 e3 ♘f6 9 ♕a4!

Something that I had not analysed, and actually quite strong.

9...♘bd7 10 b4 a6

A sad necessity. 10...♘h5 11 ♗e5 f6 12 ♗g3 is very unpleasant, while 10...♗g4 11 b5 ♗xf3 fails to 12 bxc6!

11 h3

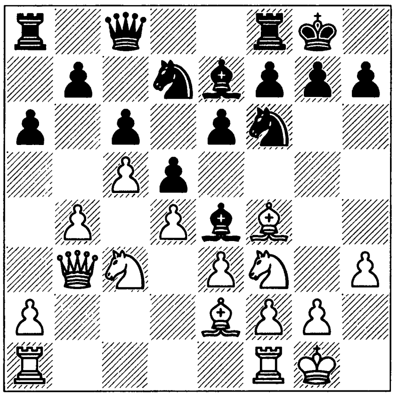
[AS – There was no need to spend a tempo on this move since after 11 ♗e2 ♗e7 12 ♕b3, 12...♘h5 is not so good due to 13 ♗e5, with a slight plus.]

11...♗e7 12 ♕b3 0-0 13 ♗e2 ♗e4!?

I spent a long time making up my mind between this move and 13...♗d8 14 0-0 ♗c7 15 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 16 a4 e5. In fact this gives Black a reasonable game, so perhaps I should not have rejected it.

14 0-0

Now Black has no opening problems. After 14 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 15 0-0 ♗d8 he is also okay.



14...♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♗d8 16 a4 ♗c7?!

With hindsight I prefer 16...♖e8, intending 17...e5 and ready to meet 17 b5 with 17...♗a5.

[AS – After 16...♖e8 17 b5, the best move is still 17...e5 with equality (18 ♗g3 exd4 19 exd4 ♗c7, etc.).]

17 ♗g5 h6 18 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 19 b5 e5??

After 19...♗a5 (Karpov's suggestion) Black is quite okay. Now he suddenly faces big problems.

[AS – The mark '??' is a bit too harsh. The position after 19...e5 is not yet so clear. Besides, 19...♗a5 does not equalize due to 20 ♘e2 with the idea of 20...b6 21 ♖fc1!, when White is on top.]

20 b6! ♗b8

With apologies to the buried rook on a8. Variations such as 20...exd4 21 ♘e2! d3 22 ♕xd3 ♗e5 23 ♘d4 and 20...e4 21 bxc7 exf3 22 ♖fb1! fxg2 23 ♔xg2 ♕xc7 24 ♕xb7 held no attraction for me at all, but perhaps I should have tried one of them. Even worse would have been 20...♗d8 21 dxe5 ♘d7 22 ♗g4!

21 a5!

Making the queenside structure quite picturesque, and demonstrating that White is not in any hurry. Otherwise Black could have played 21...a5.

21...exd4

Not wanting to die a slow death.

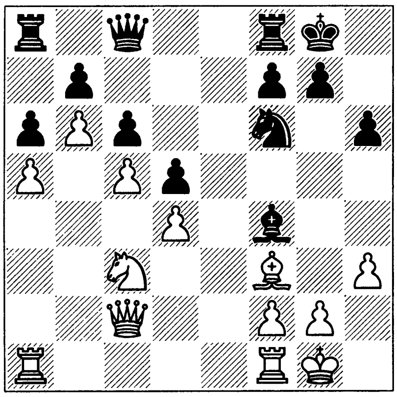
[AS – In fact, Black could have tried 21...e4 22 ♗e2 ♘h7, with the idea of 23...f5, but 23 f4! exf3 24 ♗xf3 would still have yielded White a certain edge.]

22 exd4 ♗f4!

The only reasonable move. Now 23 g3 ♕xh3 24 ♗g2 ♕h5 25 gxf4 ♘g4 is very dangerous for White. Of course he is not forced to go in for this variation.

23 ♕c2!

B



23...♕d7?

The last chance for a 'normal' game was 23...h5, although after 24 g3 ♗h6 25 ♔g2 White is a little better. Anyway, Black would have had good chances of survival in this variation, while in the game he immediately slips into a lost position.

24 g3!

Now, with the queen on c2, this is strong.

24...♕xh3

Under no circumstances, of course, could Black move his bishop back to b8.

25 ♗g2 ♕h5 26 gxf4 ♘g4 27 ♖fd1!

I underestimated this move, having counted on 27 ♖fe1 ♕h2+ 28 ♔f1 ♕xf4 with unclear chances.

27...♖ae8 28 ♖d3 ♕h2+ 29 ♔f1 f5!?

29...♕xf4 30 ♕d2 is hopeless for Black.

30 ♕d2

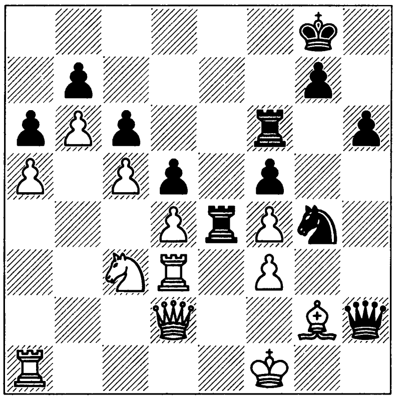
Probably not the best. I couldn't see a way to prove that I had sufficient compensation after 30 ♘e2.

30...♖f6! 31 f3

After 31 ♖h3 Black has 31...♖g6, but the text seems decisive. However ...

31...♖e4!!

W



The only chance. Now White is to move; he is a piece up, and he can take either the rook or the knight, but in fact the position is not at all clear. Both players were beginning to run short of time.

32 ♘xd5!?

This came as a shock, and my first thought was that it must be decisive. I was actually afraid of 32 ♘e2! and although after 32...♘e3+ 33 ♖xe3 ♖g6 34 ♘g3 ♖xe3 35 ♕xe3 ♕xg3 Black is still fighting, he should lose in the long run.

[AS – As Kramnik indicated one week later, in the last variation White wins rather easily with 36 ♖a2 h5 37 ♕e1 ♕xf4 38 ♕e8+ ♔h7 39 ♕e5 ♕g5 (39...♕h4 40 ♕xf5) 40 ♖e2 h4 41 ♕e3. He also admitted that he was afraid of 32...♖g6 (instead of 32...♘e3+) 33 fxe4 ♘f2 34 ♖g3 ♘xe4, but the simple 35 ♖xg6 ♘xd2+ 36 ♔e1 as well as 33 fxg4! (also indicated by Kramnik) 33...♖xg4 34 ♘g1 ♖exf4+ 35 ♘f3 gives White a decisive advantage. All this proves that I was just lucky in this game. By the way, 32 fxe4 (instead of 32 ♘e2) 32...fxe4 33 ♗f3 ♕g3! 34 ♕g2 (34 ♗xg4? exd3!) 34...♕xf4 is quite unclear.]

32...cxd5 33 c6 ♖xf4!

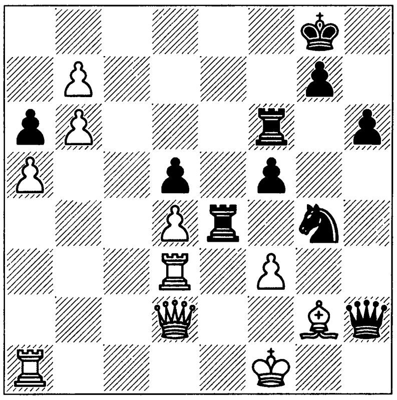
Again the only move. If 33...♖xc6 then the simple 34 fxe4, intending 35 ♖h3, is decisive.

34 cxb7

34 c7 ♖f8 35 ♖c1 ♖c8 is not so clear.

34...♖e4!

W



35 ♖c1?

Now the position is really becoming complicated. 35 b8♕+ ♕xb8 36 fxg4 ♖xg4 37 ♗xd5+ would have given White an edge.

35...♔h7! 36 b8♕!?

After spending most of his remaining time, Kramnik decided that the draw after 36 ♖c8 (or 36 ♖c7) 36...♕g3! 37 b8♕ ♘h2+ 38 ♔g1 ♖e1+ 39 ♕xe1 ♕xe1+ 40 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ was not enough for him.

36...♕xb8 37 fxg4 ♕h2! 38 ♖f3 ♖xg4 39 b7??

Now the game turns dramatically. After 39 ♖f2 ♖fg6 40 ♗xd5 White could still have played for a win, although Black would have had some hopes of a draw after 40...♕d6 41 ♗g2 ♖xd4, etc.

[AS – Kramnik has suggested 40...♕h3+ (instead of 40...♕d6) 41 ♔e2 ♖d6 with good counterplay.]

39...♖fg6 40 ♖c2?

The fatal mistake. After 40 b8♕ ♕xb8 41 ♖f2 White could still have fought for a draw.

40...♖xg2 41 ♕xg2 ♖xg2 42 ♖xg2 ♕h1+ 43 ♔f2 ♕b1 0-1

Here White resigned. He could still have put up some resistance, but objectively speaking his position is hopeless, e.g. 44 ♔g3 ♕xb7 45 ♖f5 ♕c7 and Black wins.

[AS – One can live a whole life of chess for a game like that!]

Game 53

A. Sokolov – Shirov

Lyons (French league) 1994

This annotations are based on my notes in *Informator 60*.

My performance in the French league in 1994 was another remarkable achievement for me since I scored 6 out of 6 and improved my actual rating to 2750. Pity that the Lyon club has collapsed...

1 e4 g6

In 1994 I had much success with this pawn advance, but nothing good ever lasts forever ... I have since lost many games with it in 1995 and 1996.

2 ♘c3 ♗g7 3 f4!?

A new but dubious move. Black is not obliged to transpose to a Closed Sicilian with 3...c5.

3...c6! 4 ♕f3?!

4 g3 d5 5 ♗g2, with unclear prospects, would have been more consistent, but White clearly underestimated Black's answer.

4...d5! 5 d3

Taking the pawn is not good, for example 5 exd5 ♘f6 6 ♗c4 (6 dxc6 ♘xc6 7 ♗b5 ♗d7, intending ...♘b4) 6...0-0 7 ♘ge2 ♗g4 8 ♕g3 ♗xe2, intending ...cxd5, with a slight advantage.

5...♘f6 6 h3

I had expected 6 e5 ♘g4 (6...♘fd7!? 7 h4! h5! is also very interesting) 7 h3 ♘h6 8 g4 and considered 8...f6 to be acceptable for Black. With the text Andrei tries to control all the important squares but somehow he lacks sufficient development. As usual I started looking to refute such a provocative set-up, even if this involved sacrificing.

6...e5!

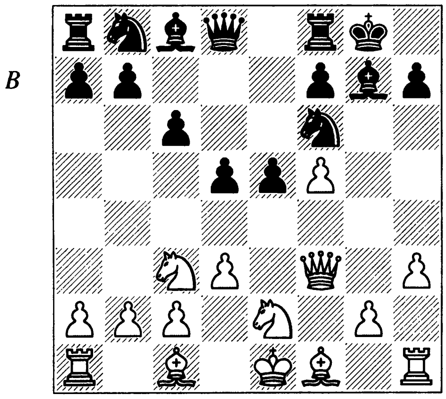
6...b5!? 7 g4 b4 8 ♘d1 ♗b7 was also interesting, but the other option is simply better!

7 f5

Again rejecting the pawn. 7 fxe5 ♘fd7 8 d4 c5! looks dangerous for White, for example 9 ♗e3 cxd4 10 ♗xd4 ♘c6 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 ♘xd5 ♘xd4 13 ♖xd4 ♘xe5 with compensation.

7...gxf5 8 exf5 0-0 9 ♘ge2?

Now White's position really becomes inferior. 9 g4 e4 10 ♕g2 would have been correct, when I am not sure that Black can establish any advantage, for instance 10...exd3 (10...♖e8 11 d4! is unclear) 11 ♗xd3 ♖e8+ 12 ♘ge2 d4 13 ♘d1 ♕d5 14 0-0 ♕xg2+ 15 ♔xg2 ♘d5 with a pleasant but unclear game.



9...e4!

The third pawn sacrifice in a row – and the soundest!

10 ♕f2

Again no. This time accepting the pawn would have given Black too much development and good attacking threats after 10 dxe4 dxe4 11 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12 ♕xe4 ♖e8 13 ♕f3 ♘d7.

10...exd3 11 cxd3 ♖e8

Threatening ...d5-d4.

12 ♔d1

This ugly move is practically the only stubborn defence. Alternatives would have been even easier for Black, e.g. 12 d4 c5! or 12 ♗e3 c5! 13 ♗xc5 ♘c6 14 0-0-0 b6 15 ♗e3 (or 15 ♗a3 d4) 15...♖xe3 16 ♕xe3 d4, with a clear advantage in every case.

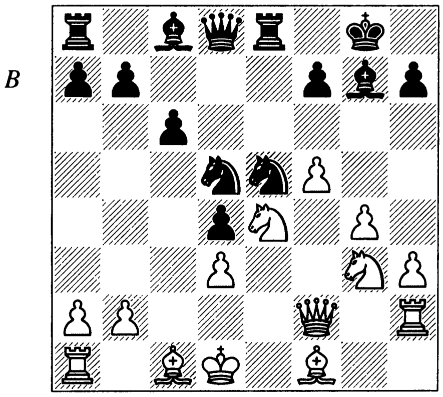
12...♘bd7??

It's hard to explain why I didn't go for the fourth (!) pawn sacrifice with 12...c5! White would then have been obliged to go for the line 13 ♕xc5 ♗xf5 14 ♘d4 (14 ♗g5? ♘fd7! 15 ♗xd8 ♘xc5 wins) 14...♗g6 15 ♗g5 ♘a6 16 ♕b5 ♘c7! 17 ♕xb7 ♖b8 18 ♕xa7 ♖xb2, when I don't think that Black's attack can be parried in the long run.

13 g4 ♘e5 14 ♘g3

Now the position is unclear again since White has achieved a nice set-up on the kingside after all.

14...d4!? 15 ♘ce4 ♘d5 16 ♖h2?



But this loss of tempo is fatal. The logical continuation would have been 16 ♘h5! ♘c4! (16...♘e3+? 17 ♗xe3 dxe3 18 ♕xe3 is bad for Black because of 18...♘c4? 19 ♘ef6+) 17 ♗g5! ♘ce3+ 18 ♔c1 ♕a5 19 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♕d2!? with an approximately equal game.

16...b6!!

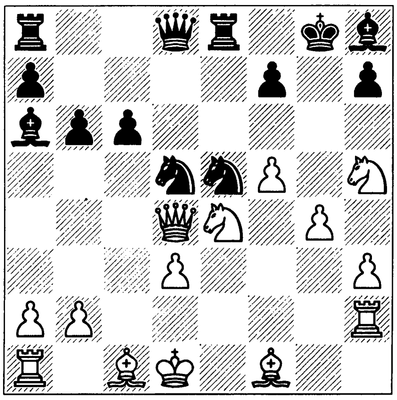
Black gets a decisive attack just in time.

17 ♘h5 ♗a6! 18 ♕xd4

The d3 pawn was impossible to defend, for example 18 ♗g5 f6 or 18 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♕xd4 c5, winning.

18...♗h8!

W



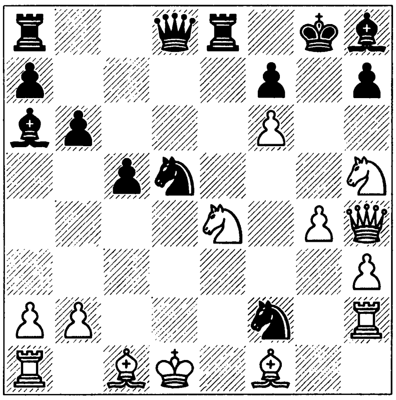
Saving the bishop for the final action and at the same time threatening 19...♘f3 or 19...♘xd3.

19 f6

Blocking just one black piece is not enough! The bishop's triumph would have been complete after 19 ♗g5 ♘xd3!

19...c5 20 ♕f2 ♘xd3 21 ♕h4 ♘f2+

W



Just to make the end more spectacular. 21...♖xe4 22 ♕g5+ ♔f8 would do the job as well.

22 ♔c2?

White avoids mate after 22 ♘xf2? ♘e3+ 23 ♔e1 ♘c2, but doesn't notice that 22 ♔e1 would have been his last try. However, Black wins easily with 22...♘xe4 23 ♗xa6 ♘b4 24 ♗e2 ♘c2+ 25 ♔f1 ♘xa1.

22...♘b4+ 0-1

Sooner or later White is checkmated, so he gave up.

Game 54

Shirov – Magem

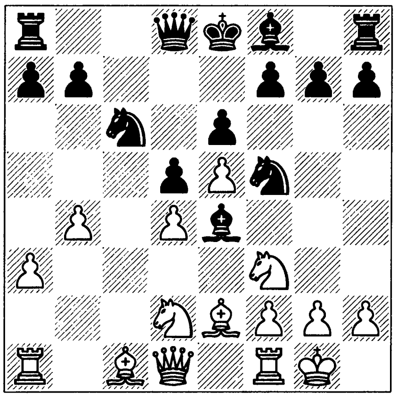
Madrid 1994

These annotations were made in May 1994, but not published until now.

My Catalan compatriot Jordi Magem has a narrow but well worked-out opening repertoire and he is a tough defender with Black. Fortunately in this game he stuck to the official theory, not knowing the latest developments, which I was told by Bologan in time for this game.

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♗f5 4 ♗e2 e6 5 ♘f3 c5 6 0-0 ♘c6 7 c3 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♘ge7 9 a3 ♗e4 10 ♘bd2 ♘f5 11 b4

B



11...a5

This theoretical move is, in fact, a serious mistake. 11...♕b6 12 ♗b2 ♗e7 13 ♖e1 ♖d8, as played by Karpov against Short (Linares 1992) is better. Also interesting is 12...♖d8!?, as suggested by Magem after the game.

12 g4!

This move, first played by Bologan against Khalifman (Bundesliga 1994), practically refutes 11...a5.

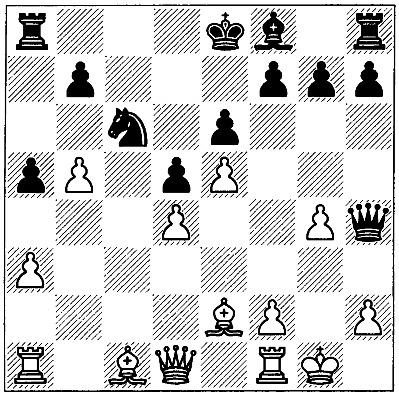
12...♗xf3

Khalifman tried 12...♘fxd4, but after 13 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 ♗e3 ♘xe2+ 16 ♕xe2 ♕d3 17 ♕b2, White's initiative became extremely dangerous.

13 ♘xf3 ♘h4 14 ♘xh4

The best. Now Black's queen on h4 prevents him from developing normally.

14...♕xh4 15 b5



15...♘b8

I had planned to meet 15...♘e7 with 16 ♗f4, when White is clearly on top.

16 f4 ♗e7

This takes space away from the queen, but I can't suggest anything better, for example 16...♘d7 17 b6! or 16...♕d8 17 f5 ♗e7 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 ♗e3 ♘d7 20 b6! and White has a strong attack.

17 ♗e3?

A silly move, after which the position becomes much less clear. After the simple 17 ♔g2 ♘d7 (or 17...♗d8 18 a4!) 18 ♖f3 ♗d8 19 a4! Black would not have been left with anything to hope for.

17...♘d7 18 ♔g2

An alternative idea was 18 g5, but I don't see how I could have proved an advantage after 18...h6 19 g6 f5.

18...♗d8 19 f5 ♕e7

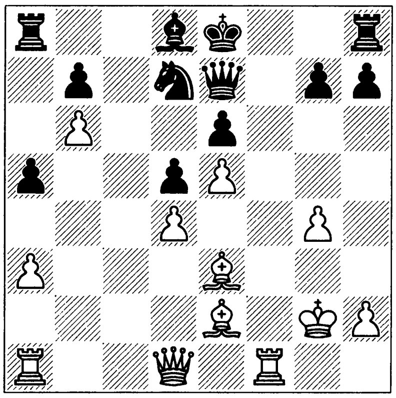
I was pleased when my opponent played this move, as I was more worried about 19...0-0. After 20 ♕d3 ♗b6! 21 ♕d2 ♕e7 White does not achieve anything, so he should play 20 ♕d2, with a slight plus.

20 fxe6 fxe6?

Practically the decisive mistake. After 20...♕xe6 21 g5 ♘b6 22 ♗g4 ♕e7 23 ♕f3 0-0 24 h4 White seems better to me, but the position is still full of fight. I guess that Magem must have overlooked my next move.

21 b6!

I played this without hesitation. Magem had just 15 minutes to reach move 40 and must protect his king against all White's pieces. I don't think such a defence is possible.



21...♖f8

This loses by force, but 21...♗xb6 22 ♗b5 is very unpleasant for Black since 22...0-0-0 fails to 23 ♕c1+ ♔b8 24 ♗g5.

22 ♕c2 ♖xf1 23 ♖xf1 ♗xb6 24 ♗b5 g6

What else? 24...♕xa3 25 ♗g5 wins.

25 ♕c1!

The decisive penetration.

25...♕h4

25...♗d8 loses to 26 ♗h6 ♕h4 27 ♖f8+ ♔e7 28 ♗g5+.

26 h3 ♗d8 27 a4?!

I didn't see that 27 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 28 ♖f7+ ♔e8 29 ♖xb7 wins immediately. Anyhow, there is no hurry because Black is in zugzwang.

27...♗e7

After 27...♖b8 White has several ways to win, for example 28 ♗h6 ♗e7 29 ♕c7 ♖d8 30 ♗d2! ♗b4 31 ♕b6! ♕e7 32 ♗g5, but the text loses even more quickly.

28 ♕c7 ♖d8 29 ♕b6 1-0

Black resigned as there is no defence to 30 ♕xe6.

Game 55
Nikolić – Shirov
Horgen 1994

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my analysis in *Informator 61*.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6

With this move order White can answer 4...a6 with 5 ♕c2!?

5 ♘f3 ♘bd7 6 ♗d3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 ♗b7

I spent around 15 minutes on this move. After 8...a6, 9 e4 c5 10 e5 has caused Black some trouble recently.

9 0-0

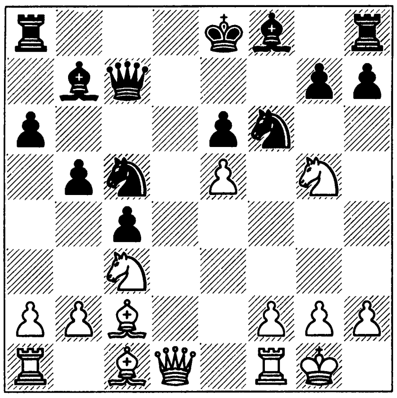
9 a3 is a more popular continuation nowadays.

9...a6 10 e4 c5 11 d5

Here this is forced.

11...♕c7 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 ♗c2 c4 14 ♘g5 ♘c5 15 e5

B



15...♕xe5

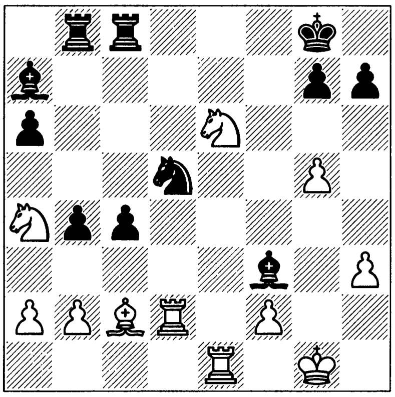
15...♕c6 has not yet been refuted, but looks risky.

16 ♖e1 ♕d6 17 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 18 ♗e3 0-0 19 ♖ad1 ♗e7 20 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 21 ♘xe6 ♖fc8 22 h3 ♖ab8

This, Lautier's move, had already been tried several times (for example Nikolić-Bareev, Munich 1994) and Black had never experienced any problems. But Nikolić had something new in mind.

23 g4 ♗f3 24 ♖d2 b4 25 ♘a4 ♗a7 26 g5 ♘d5

W



27 g6!

This natural move is a novelty. Nikolić-Bareev saw 27 ♘d4.

27...h6

Probably best. 27...hxg6? loses to 28 ♘g5 c3 29 bxc3 bxc3 30 ♖d3 and 27...c3 also yields White some advantage after 28 bxc3 bxc3 29 gxh7+ ♔h8 30 ♖d3 ♘b4 31 ♖xf3 ♘xc2 32 ♖e4. But now the black king is certainly not the strongest piece on the board.

28 ♘d4 c3 29 bxc3

29 ♖d3 fails to 29...cxb2 30 ♘xb2 ♗xd4 31 ♗b3 ♖c6! and Black is better.

29...bxc3 30 ♖d3!

Still trying to prove an 'opening' advantage. 30 ♘xc3 ♗xd4 31 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 32 ♖xd4 ♖xc2 33 ♖xd5 ♖c6 would have led to an immediate draw.

30...♘b4 31 ♖xf3 ♗xd4 32 ♗f5! *(D)*

The point of White's idea. Black's pieces co-ordinate badly, though he is compensated by the dangerous passed pawn on c3.

32...♖c7

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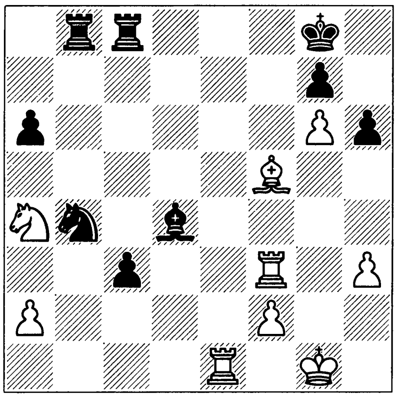


The only move. 32...♖c6? is bad in view of 33 a3 c2 34 ♖c1 and 32...c2 33 ♗e6+ ♔h8 34 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 35 ♘c3! is just hopeless.

33 a3 ♘c6 34 ♖f4??

Throwing a good game away. Nikolić could have chosen between the exchange sacrifice 34 ♘xc3 ♘e5 35 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 36 ♘d5 or the quiet 34 ♔g2 ♘e7 (I see nothing better) 35 ♗c2, when in either case he has slightly better chances due to the terrible position of the enemy king.

34...♗e5

Now Black is on top.

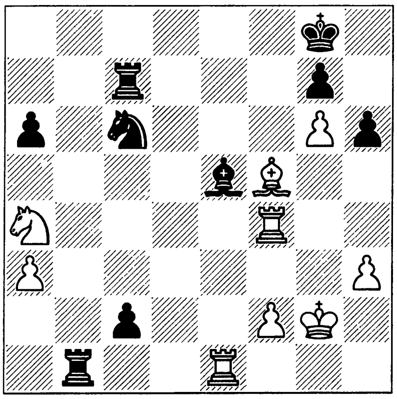
35 ♖fe4

Or 35 ♖c4 ♘d4 and Black wins.

35...c2 36 ♔g2 ♖b1 37 ♖f4?!

Beautiful but insufficient. During the game I didn't see how to win after 37 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 38 ♖xe5 but post-mortem analysis proved that 38...♖b8 39 ♗xc2 ♖xc2 40 ♘c5 ♖f8! leaves White without chances.

B



37...♖xe1 38 ♗e6+ ♖f7

Fortunately I found this after about five minutes' thought after the shocking 37 ♖f4.

39 gxf7+

The line 39 ♖xf7 ♘d8 is also winning for Black.

39...♔f8 40 ♘c5 ♘b8

40...c1♕ 41 ♘d7+ ♔e7 42 f8♕+ ♔xe6 is also good enough to win.

41 ♖b4

Or 41 ♖c4 c1♕ 42 ♖xc1 ♖xc1 43 ♘d3 ♖c6 and wins.

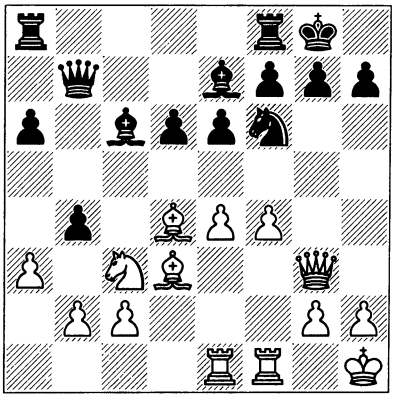
41...c1♕ 42 ♖xb8+ ♗xb8 43 ♘d7+ ♔e7 44 f8♕+ ♔xe6 0-1

Game 56
Shirov – Benjamin
Horgen 1994

These notes were made during the preparation of this book, based on my analysis in *Informator 61*.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 ♕c7 7 ♗e3 ♘f6 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 f4 d6 10 ♕e1 0-0 11 ♕g3 ♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 b5 13 a3 ♗b7 14 ♔h1 ♗c6 15 ♖ae1 ♕b7 16 ♗d3 b4

W



All this has been played many times before, including the game Shirov-Ivanchuk, Linares 1993, where I continued 17 axb4 and got nothing. This time I played a move that I thought was new.

17 ♘d1!?

In fact I later found the game Mednis-Jansa, Budapest 1978, on my database, in which Black continued 17...bxa3 18 bxa3 ♘h5 and lost. So Benjamin's reply is the novelty.

17...g6 18 ♘f2!

I saw no other idea as 18 f5 fails to 18...e5 followed by the capture of the e4 pawn, and 18 ♘e3 ♘xe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 20 ♘g4 f6 wasn't very attractive either.

18...bxa3 19 bxa3 ♘h5

19...d5 20 e5 ♘e4 21 ♗xe4 dxe4 22 ♘g4 would have given White a slight edge.

20 ♕e3!

This is better than 20 ♕h3, which could have been answered by either 20...♘xf4 21 ♘g4 e5 22 ♖xf4 ♗g5! or 20...f5 with unclear play in both cases. 20 ♕f3 f5 is nothing for White either.

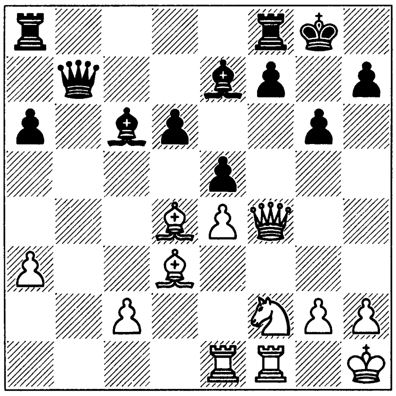
20...♘xf4?!

20...f5 was still a better option for Black, although after 21 ♗c4! (21 exf5?! ♗xg2+ 22 ♔g1 ♗xf1 23 ♕xe6+ [23 ♔xf1 e5!] 23...♖f7 24 ♗e4 ♕c8 is unclear) 21...d5 22 exf5! exf5 (22...dxc4 loses by force after 23 ♕xe6+ ♖f7 24 fxg6 hxg6 25 ♕xg6+ ♘g7 26 ♘g4!) 23 ♗b3 ♗f6 24 ♘d3 White holds the advantage.

21 ♕xf4

After 21 ♘g4 e5, 22 ♖xf4? is bad because of 22...♗g5 23 ♘f6+ ♔g7! and 22 ♕xf4 simply transposes back into the game.

21...e5



22 ♘g4!

This is much stronger than 22 ♗xe5 dxe5 23 ♕xe5 f6 24 ♕e6+ ♔g7 with some compensation for the pawn minus.

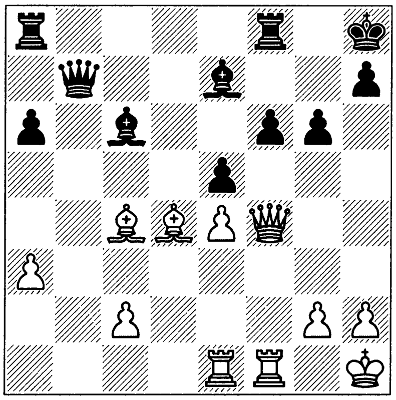
22...f6?!

This loses quickly. During the game I couldn't see a clear route to victory after 22...exd4 (not 22...exf4?? 23 ♘h6 mate), but now I think that 23 ♘h6+ ♔g7 24 ♘xf7 ♗g5 (both 24...g5 25 ♕f2 and 24...♗e8 25 ♕h6+ ♔g8 26 ♘g5 lose on the spot) 25 ♕xg5 ♖xf7 26 e5! offers Black few chances of survival.

23 ♗c4+ ♔h8

Of course 23...♔g7 24 ♕h6+ and 23...d5 24 exd5 ♗xd5 25 ♘xe5 fxe5 26 ♕xe5 aren't worth thinking about.

24 ♘xe5 dxe5



25 ♕xe5

25 ♗xe5 was equally strong but why not play something spectacular? Now 26 ♖xf6 is threatened.

25...♔g7

Black can't accept the sacrifice as after 25...fxe5 26 ♗xe5+ ♗f6 (26...♖f6 27 ♖xf6 ♔g7 28 ♖xc6+ and 29 ♗d5 wins for White) 27 ♖xf6 ♔g7 28 ♖f7+ ♔h6 29 ♗g7+ White has a won ending.

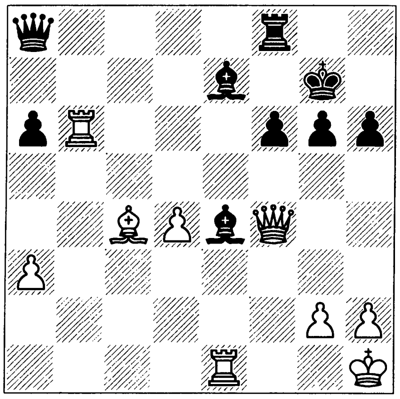
26 ♕f4

Now White has an extra pawn and the initiative. Black cannot last long.

26...♖ad8 27 c3 h6 28 ♖b1 ♕a8 29 ♖b6 ♖xd4

If 29...♗xe4 then 30 ♖e1 ♗xg2+ 31 ♔g1 ♖de8 32 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 33 ♖xf6 wins.

30 cxd4 ♗xe4 31 ♖e1



31...f5

I would have preferred the game to end with another queen sacrifice: 31...♗xg2+ 32 ♔g1 ♗d8 33 ♖b8 ♕f3 (after 33...♕c6 34 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 35 ♖e7+ ♔f8 36 ♖f7+ ♔e8 37 ♕xh6, mate is unavoidable) 34 ♖xd8 ♕xf4 (34...♖xd8 35 ♕c7+) 35 ♖e7+.

32 ♕e5+ ♗f6 33 ♖xf6 1-0

Black resigned in view of 33...♖xf6 34 ♕e7+.

Game 57
Shirov – Yudasin
Moscow 1994

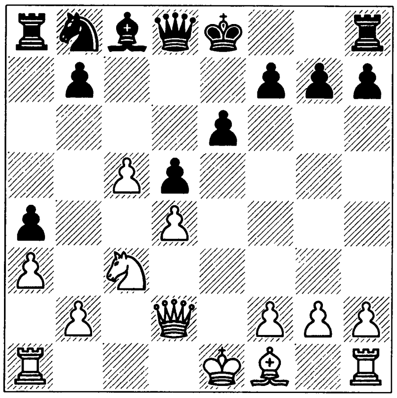
The game was annotated in December 1994 and published in *New In Chess* and other magazines.

The playing conditions and especially the meals at the Moscow Olympiad were so bad that in the opening rounds I was completely slow-witted. Fortunately a loss in round five shook me out of my torpor and I managed to win four games with five draws in the latter rounds, although this was insufficient to avoid losing 12 FIDE rating points.

My best achievements in the Olympiad were my games against Lalić (a draw after both players missed opportunities to win – see the Foreword by Jon Speelman) and the present game, which I hope readers will find amusing.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♘ge2 cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 c5 ♘e4 8 ♗d2 ♘xd2 9 ♕xd2 a5 10 a3 ♗xc3 11 ♘xc3 a4

Yudasin had already played this line against Lautier in the Manila Interzonal, and although he lost that game, he was evidently not put off by the opening. I suspected that he would try it again.



12 ♗d3 ♗d7!?

But here is the difference. Four and a half years ago Leonid had played 12...b6.

13 0-0 ♘c6!?

Even more surprising. This rare move was introduced into practice by Karpov in his match against Korchnoi in Baguio 1978.

14 ♗c2 ♘e7 15 ♖ae1

Probably a novelty. 15 ♖fe1 was tried in Rechlis-Portisch, Manila Interzonal 1990, but it is not easy to evaluate whether the rook stands better on a1 than f1. Also interesting is 15 ♕d1!? which, according to Yudasin, leads to an unclear position after 15...♕a5 16 ♕g4 g6 17 ♕g5 ♕d8! 18 ♕h6 ♘g8!

15...b6

Another possibility was 15...0-0, when I intended 16 ♕d1 ♕a5 17 ♖e3!?

16 ♕d1 bxc5 17 dxc5 ♕a5 18 ♕d4

Nothing good comes from 18 ♘xd5? exd5 19 ♕xd5 ♗e6 (Rechlis-Portisch, but with the white rooks on a1 and e1) 20 ♕g5 ♘g6 with the idea of 21 f4 0-0.

18...0-0! 19 ♖e3

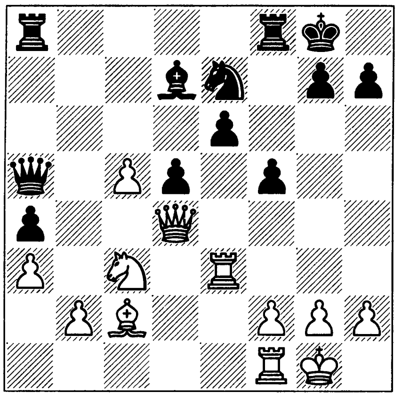
It would have been much worse to play 19 ♗xh7+?! ♔xh7 20 ♕h4+ ♔g8 21 ♕xe7

♖a7 (with the idea of 22...♗b5) 22 ♕d6 ♖d8! With the text move White tries to generate some counterplay.

19...f5?

After this move he is more than successful. Probably correct was 19...♖fc8, as indicated by Yudasin after the game, although it is difficult to assess the position after 20 ♖h3 (20 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 21 ♕h4+ ♔g8 22 ♕xe7 ♕d8! is again a little better for Black) 20...♘g6 21 ♗xg6 hxg6 (21...fxg6 22 ♘e4! is unclear) 22 ♕h4 f6 23 ♕h7+ ♔f7 24 ♖h6! ♖g8 25 ♖xg6 ♕xc5 26 ♕h5 ♖ac8! with unclear chances.

W



20 ♗xa4!

This sacrifice is in fact too obvious to deserve an exclamation mark, but at least from this moment on I could not complain about lacking inspiration.

20...♗xa4 21 ♖xe6 ♘g6

If 21...♘c6 then 22 ♕xd5 is better for White.

22 b4!

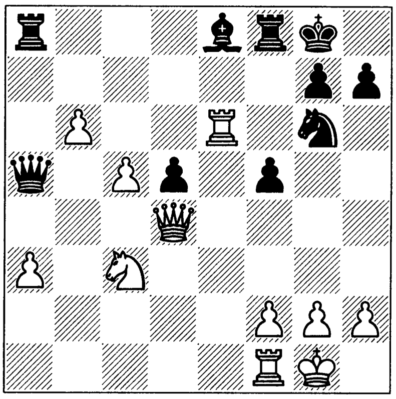
Of course not 22 ♕xd5? ♘f4 or 22 ♘xd5?! ♗b3.

22...♕a7 23 b5 ♕a5 24 b6 ♗e8 *(D)*

Here I sank into deep thought, since I couldn't find a way to obtain a clear advantage, though it seemed to me that two passed pawns supported by active pieces should prevail against a bishop. Probably I should have chosen 25 b7 ♖b8 26 ♖b6 with a clear edge, as what I played was rather too spectacular.

25 ♘xd5!? ♗f7 26 ♖xg6!? ♗xg6

W



Of course not 26...hxg6?? 27 ♘e7+ and 28 ♕h4 mate.

27 c6 ♖ae8!

Oops! I had missed this, so now I had to start all over again.

28 b7

Perhaps White is still better since his pieces co-ordinate perfectly and the pawns are so close to queening. In time-trouble my opponent was unable to put up the strongest resistance.

28...♗f7

I was afraid of 28...♖e1, but Yudasin showed me 29 h3 ♖xf1+ 30 ♔xf1 ♖e8 31 ♔g1 winning.

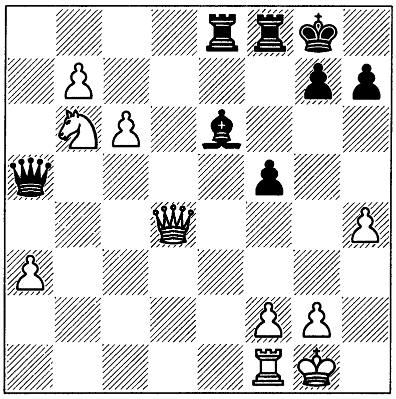
29 ♘b6 ♗e6

Now 29...♖e1 fails to 30 ♕b4 ♖xf1+ 31 ♔xf1 ♕a6+ 32 ♔g1.

30 h4

Perhaps it was better to play 30 a4 ♖d8 31 ♕b2 in order to keep all three sisters on the queenside alive.

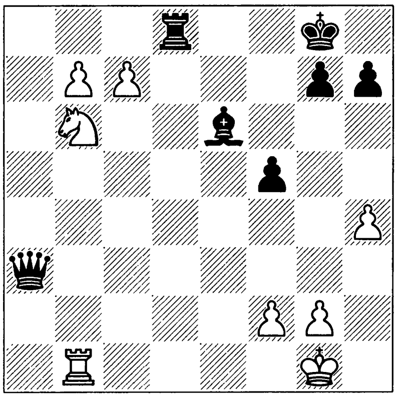
B



30...♕xa3 31 ♖b1 ♖d8?

Time-trouble. Although Black cannot escape after 31...♕a7 32 ♕d6! ♕b8 33 ♘c8! ♖xc8 34 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 35 bxc8♕ or 31...♕a2 32 ♖b4 ♕c2 33 ♕d6, Black should try something as this is capitulation.

32 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 33 c7 *(D)*



The pawn prepares for touchdown.

33...♖f8

33...♕d6 34 cxd8♕+ ♕xd8 35 ♘c8 ♗xc8 36 b8♕ is hopeless.

34 b8♕ f4 35 ♖e1 ♕d6 36 c8♕ 1-0

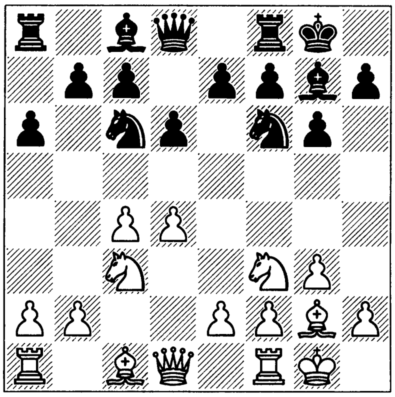
Completing the picture. Black resigned in view of 36...♕xb8 37 ♕xe6+.

Game 58
Ivanchuk – Shirov
Monaco (rapidplay) 1995

This annotations were made in May 1995, and published in the tournament book.

Usually rapid chess games are not worth publishing. However, sometimes they can be very exciting with many interesting ideas. The quality and precision may go down, but the entertainment value often increases. Hopefully, this is just such a game.

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 0-0 ♘c6 6 ♘c3 d6 7 d4 a6



This position had already occurred in a game between the same opponents only one month previously (Linares 1995). On that occasion Ivanchuk played 8 ♗g5 and the game ended in a draw. Here he tries to improve on White's play.

8 ♖e1 ♖b8 9 ♖b1

Already a novelty.

9...b5 10 cxb5 axb5 11 b4

The point of White's play. Now 11...d5 12 ♘e5 didn't appeal to me, so I went for the standard manoeuvre ...

11...♗f5 12 e4 ♗g4

I didn't waste a second on this move. In serious chess I would also probably have considered 12...♘xe4!? 13 ♖xe4 d5. After 14 ♖e2 ♗xb1 15 ♘xb1 ♘xb4 Black might even be slightly better, so in the post-mortem Ivanchuk suggested 14 ♘e5! ♘xe5 15 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 16 dxe5 ♗xb1 17 ♘xb1 e6 18 ♘d2. At the time we decided that White has an advantage, but now I think that after 18...c5! 19 bxc5 ♕a5 Black gets excellent counterplay.

13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 e5

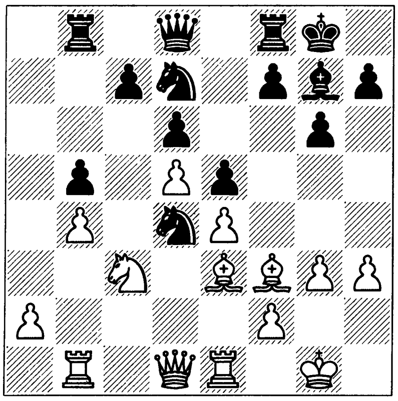
14...♘d7 15 e5! ♘a7 16 e6! fxe6 17 ♗g4 is in White's favour.

15 d5 ♘d4 16 ♗e3 ♘d7 *(D)*

16...♘xf3+ 17 ♕xf3 ♘d7 18 ♕e2 f5 19 ♘xb5 f4 20 ♗d2 looks insufficient for Black.

17 ♗g2

During the game I was quite afraid of 17 ♗e2 f5 (I see nothing better, because 17...♖e8 18 ♗f1 f5 19 exf5 ♘xf5 20 ♘xb5 yields White a pawn for nothing) 18 exf5 ♘xf5 19 ♗xb5 e4 20 ♗xd7 or 18...gxf5 19 ♗xd4 exd4 20 ♘xb5, when in both cases White is clearly better. However, after



18...♘xe2+! 19 ♕xe2 gxf5 (indicated by Ivanchuk) things are still unclear.

17...♕f6 18 ♖c1 ♖b7 19 h4!? h6

Probably 19...♕e7 was also playable.

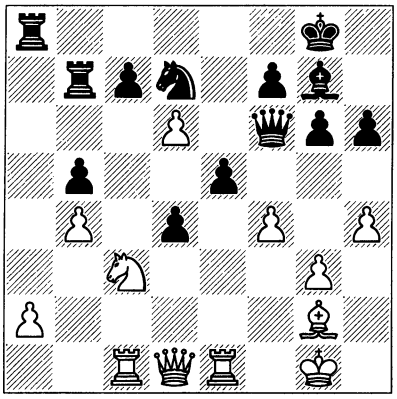
20 f4!?

A very interesting idea, going into the sort of complications that one would normally avoid in rapid chess. 20 ♗xd4 exd4 21 ♘e2 ♖a8 22 ♖c2 was another idea.

20...♖a8

Black must be consistent with his plan. 20...♖e8 would have been a waste of time after 21 ♕d3.

21 ♗xd4 exd4 22 e5! dxe5 23 d6



The point of 20 f4. Now we have arrived at the critical moment of the game and I should have thought for longer than I did.

23...dxc3?

Natural and bad. Correct was 23...c6! 24 ♗xc6 (24 ♘e4 ♕f5 seems insufficient for White) 24...dxc3 25 ♕d5! (this looks like the only move since 25 ♗xb7 ♖xa2 26 ♖xc3 exf4 is clearly in Black's favour) 25...exf4 (if 25...♘b6 then 26 fxe5 is possible) 26 ♗xb7 fxg3 with a very complicated game, for example 27 ♖f1 (27 ♖c2 ♖d8 is also far from clear) 27...♕xh4 28 ♖xf7! ♗d4+ 29 ♔f1 ♖f8 30 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8.

24 ♗xb7 ♖xa2 25 ♕d5!

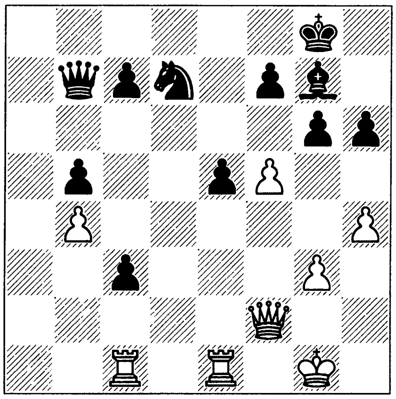
I saw, but clearly underestimated, this move. Of course 25 dxc7? is impossible due to 25...♕b6+.

25...♕xd6

Having thought for a while, I decided to give up a second exchange. The post-mortem analysis showed that the line 25...♖d2 26 dxc7! (I should have played 23...c6 to prevent this possibility) 26...♕b6+ 27 ♕c5! ♘xc5 28 c8♕+ ♗f8 29 bxc5 ♕xc5+ 30 ♕xc5 ♗xc5+ 31 ♔h1 b4 32 ♖xe5 c2 33 ♖d5! (a move found by Ljubojević) is winning for White.

26 ♕xa2 ♕b6+ 27 ♕f2 ♕xb7 28 f5!

Very strong. Otherwise Black would have had sufficient compensation for the two exchanges.



28...e4 29 fxg6 fxg6 30 ♕e3!

Here I started thinking again and realized that I was lost.

30...♘e5 31 ♕xe4 ♕b6+

Also losing is 31...♕xe4 32 ♖xe4 ♘d3 33 ♖c2 c5 34 bxc5 b4 (or 34...♘xc5 35 ♖b4) 35 c6 b3 36 ♖xc3 ♗xc3 37 c7. Since in Monaco they use the Fischer clock (which obviously improves the quality of rapid games), the rest of the game was not too difficult for Vasily.

32 ♔g2 ♘c4 33 ♕e6+ ♕xe6 34 ♖xe6 ♔f7 35 ♖c6 ♗e5 36 ♔f3 ♘d2+

36...♗d6 would have offered more resistance without changing the final result.

37 ♔e3 ♘c4+ 38 ♔e4 ♗xg3 39 ♖xc3 ♗d6 40 ♔d5 ♗xb4 41 ♖f3+ ♔e8 42 ♖xg6 ♔d7 43 ♖xh6 ♗e7 44 h5 ♘d6 45 ♖xd6+ ♗xd6 46 ♖f7+ ♔e8 47 ♔e6 b4 48 h6 ♗e5 49 h7 ♗h8 50 ♖f3 1-0

Game 59
Sion Castro – Shirov
Leon 1995

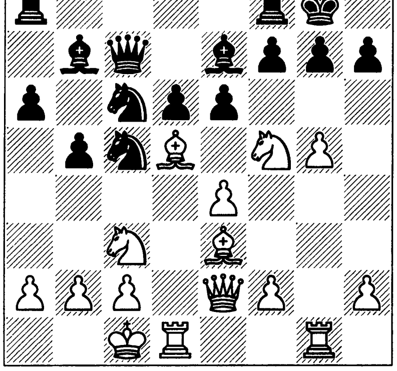
The game was annotated in May 1995 and published in *New in Chess*.

Before this game I had expected a Velimirović Attack because it suits Sion Castro's sharp style and he had enjoyed some success with it. Even so, I still didn't manage to prepare properly.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♘c6 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♗e3 ♗e7 8 ♕e2 a6 9 ♗b3 ♕c7 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 ♖hg1 ♘d7 12 g4 ♘c5 13 ♘f5 b5 14 ♗d5

For those readers who are unfamiliar with this variation, I should point out that these sacrifices are well-known theory and that it has been proved that neither piece can be taken.

14...♗b7 15 g5



This is the critical position. Some time ago there was the game A. Sokolov-Salov, Nikolaev 1983, which White won beautifully after 15...exf5 16 g6 hxg6 17 ♖xg6 ♘e5 18 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 19 ♖g1+ ♘g6 20 exf5 ♖h8 21 ♗d4+ ♗f6 22 fxg6 fxg6 23 ♕g4 ♖h6 24 ♗xf6+ ♔h7 25 ♖e1, etc. Even more convincing was the game Sion Castro-Rivera, Cordoba 1991, which continued 15...b4 16 ♕h5 ♘e5 17 ♖g3 exf5 18 exf5 bxc3 19 g6 cxb2+ 20 ♔b1 hxg6 21 fxg6 ♘xg6 22 ♕xg6 ♗f6 23 ♕xf6 ♘e6 24 ♗xe6 fxe6 25 ♕xe6+ ♕f7 26 ♖xg7+ 1-0. When I saw this game on my computer I felt sure that Sion Castro would repeat this line in our encounter, although I didn't have much time to learn all its secrets. I recalled that in the mid-1980s Latvian IM (now GM) Zigurds Lanka had found the move 15...♖fc8!?, which he successfully introduced in a little-known rapidplay game against Andrei Sokolov, but when I checked my computer I discovered that this move had also been played in Brunner-Wittmann, Graz 1991, which had continued 15...♖fc8 16 ♖g3 ♘e5 17 ♖h3 ♘g6 18 ♕h5 ♘f8 19 ♗d4 ♗xd5 20 ♕h6 ♗xg5+ 21 ♕xg5 f6 22 ♘h6+ ♔h8 23 ♕xf6 e5 24 ♕f3 ♗e6 25 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 26 ♖g3 b4 27 ♘f7+ ♗xf7 28 ♕xf7 ♖c7 29 ♕d5 and it seems that here Black could have obtained a decisive advantage with 29...♖ac8. Having looked at this I decided that my 'preparation' was perfect and set off for the game.

15...♖fc8 16 ♖g3 ♘e5

Here I realized that after 17 f4! I would probably have been in trouble. The following analysis doesn't offer Black very much: 17...exf5 (or 17...b4 18 ♗xc5 dxc5 19 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 20 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 21 fxe5 bxc3 22 ♖xc3) 18 ♗xc5 ♘g6 (18...dxc5 19 fxe5) 19 ♗e3 b4 20 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 21 ♘d5 fxe4 22 f5, with a clear advantage for White in each case. Perhaps Black can try 17...♘g6, but this looks somewhat risky after 18 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 19 f5 with a strong attack. Anyway, I had no time to calculate all this as Sion Castro quickly played

17 ♗xb7

A new move but not such a good one.

17...♘xb7?!

I rejected 17...♕xb7 because I was afraid of 18 ♘xe7+ (18 f4 exf5 19 fxe5 ♘xe4 is fine for Black) 18...♕xe7 19 f4 ♘c4 20 ♗d4 and White has some dangerous threats, for example 20...♘d7 21 ♖h3! b4 (or 21...♘f8 22 f5! exf5 23 ♘d5 with an attack) 22 ♕h5 ♘f8 23 ♗xg7! and now:

a) 23...♔xg7 24 f5! f6 (or 24...exf5 25 exf5) 25 ♕h6+ ♔h8 26 gxf6 ♕f7 27 ♘e2 with a strong attack;

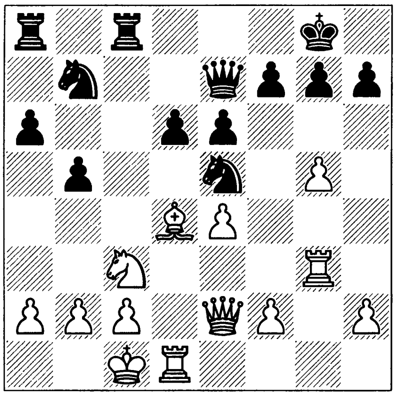
b) 23...bxc3 24 ♗xc3 and again White has powerful attacking chances.

However, instead of 19...♘c4 Black can play 19...♘ed7! and White's attack is not strong enough, e.g. 20 f5 b4 21 f6 ♕e8! 22 fxg7 bxc3 23 ♕h5 cxb2+ 24 ♔b1 ♘xe4 25 ♖h3 ♘c3+ 26 ♔xb2 ♘xd1+ 27 ♔c1 ♔xg7 and there is no mate: 28 ♕h6+ ♔g8 29 g6 ♘xe3 30 ♕xh7+ ♔f8, etc.

18 ♘xe7+

18 ♗b6 ♕d7 19 ♗d4 looks very dangerous, but after the continuation 19...exf5 20 ♗xe5 ♕e6 21 ♗d4 b4 22 ♘d5 ♗d8 Black is not yet lost.

18...♕xe7 19 ♗d4



Here I realized just how precarious my position was. White threatens to smash through with 20 f4 ♘c4 21 f5 or 21 ♖h3. I had to find something extraordinary.

19...b4! 20 ♘a4 ♘c4!

Black is not afraid to sacrifice the exchange and also threatens 21...♕d7 22 b3 ♘a3 23 ♘b6 ♕b5!

21 b3!?

Very ambitious but not too bad.

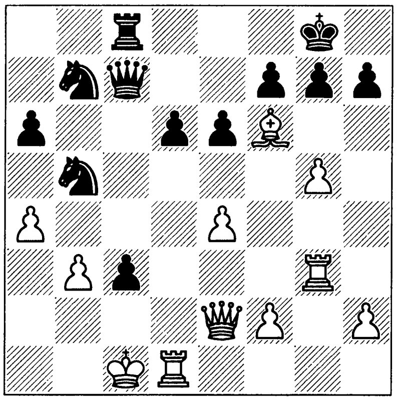
21...♘a3 22 c4?!

This turns the game in Black's favour. 22 ♖d2 looked safer.

22...bxc3 23 ♘b6 ♘b5! 24 ♗f6

I was very afraid of 24 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 25 ♕c2 (25 a4 c2! offers Black excellent attacking chances), but in the post-mortem it became clear that after 25...♘c5! (not 25...♘a3? 26 ♖xc3! or 25...d5? 26 a4! and White is on top in both cases) 26 ♗xc5 dxc5 Black probably has the advantage. Still, this was better than the text.

24...♕c7 25 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 26 a4



26...e5!?

I preferred this to 26...♕a5 because I couldn't see a clear win after 27 ♕a2 with the idea of 28 b4.

27 ♕a2?

This loses at once but the endgame arising after 27 ♕c4 c2! (not 27...♘c5? 28 g6!! with attacking chances or 27...♘a5 28 ♕d5!) 28 ♖d2 ♕xc4 29 bxc4 ♘d4 30 ♖xd4 exd4 31 ♗xd4 ♖xc4 32 ♖b3 (32 ♖c3 ♖xc3 33 ♗xc3 ♘c5 34 f3 ♘xa4 35 ♗d4 ♘c5 36 ♔xc2 ♘e6 37 ♗e3 f6 38 h4 ♔f7 39 ♔c3 ♘d8 is also very good for Black) 32...♖xd4 33 ♖xb7 g6 is probably lost for White in the long run.

27...c2 28 ♖dd3 ♕a5 29 ♖ge3 ♘c5

All Black's pieces are now taking part in the game.

30 ♖d5 ♘c3 31 ♕xc2 ♘xd5 32 exd5 ♘xb3+ 33 ♖xb3 ♕e1+ 0-1

Game 60
Shirov – Timman
Biel 1995

The game was annotated in August 1996 and published in *New In Chess*.

During my preparation for this game I had anticipated that Jan would answer 1 e4 with 1...e5, but since I had recently had a bad experience with it as White I was unsure which variation to choose. On the way to the game I passed a blitz tournament that was taking place on large garden boards (and in which some strong players were competing). The sight of these players moving big pieces and then running to press the clock made quite a funny impression on me and I decided to play something entertaining myself.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 b4!?

When Kasparov does something unusual at the board, it quickly becomes fashionable.

4...♗xb4 5 c3 ♗e7

Nowadays 5...♗a5 is unpopular for some reason.

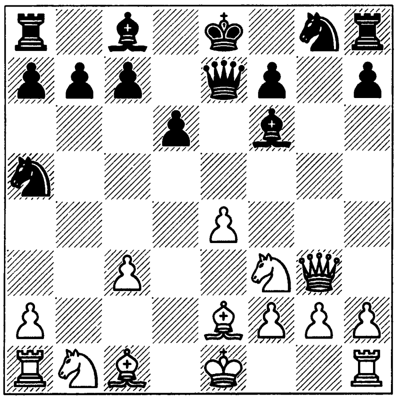
6 d4 ♘a5 7 ♗e2 exd4 8 ♕xd4 d6

A novelty, though, as Timman pointed out after the game, this move was recommended by someone after the game Kasparov-Anand, Riga 1995, in which Black played 8...♘f6.

9 ♕xg7

The only sensible move.

9...♗f6 10 ♕g3 ♕e7



11 0-0

It is not necessary to defend the e4 pawn because 11...♕xe4? fails to 12 ♖e1.

[AS – A couple of weeks after the game the Dutch GM Roberto Cifuentes demonstrated to me that 12 ♖e1 can simply be answered by 12...♔f8 13 ♗b5 ♕g6, when White has no real compensation for the pawn. Therefore his only chance would have been 12 ♘d4!?, but this is still not convincing. I have to admit that 11 0-0 is a complete bluff and the right continuation would have been 11 ♕f4 with an unclear game.]

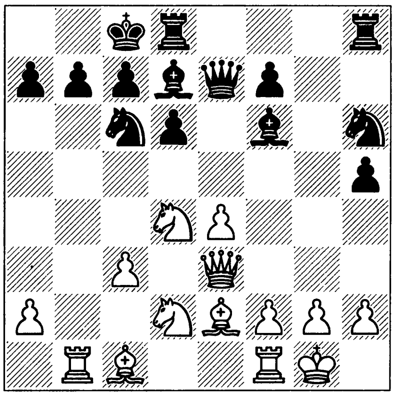
11...♗d7 12 ♘d4!?

12 ♘bd2 ♗xc3 13 ♖b1 ♘f6 didn't appeal to me.

12...0-0-0 13 ♘d2 ♘c6

If immediately 13...h5 then White might continue 14 ♖b1!? with the idea of 15 ♕d3!? After 13...♘c6, 14 ♕d3 can be met by 14...♘e5!? 15 ♕e3 c5 with an unclear position.

14 ♕e3 h5 15 ♖b1 ♘h6



Here I sank into deep thought. I was sure that I was already almost winning, so I started to look for a forced continuation. Although I soon realized that 16 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 17 ♕xa7 (threatening 18 ♗b5) 17...♕e5! would have been very unclear, I nevertheless couldn't believe that White has nothing decisive. When I finally played

16 ♕d3

(threatening 17 ♕a6) I had just 23 minutes left for the remaining 24 moves, but from that point on I applied maximum concentration.

16...b6

I had expected 16...♖dg8, after which 17 ♖xb7 ♘xd4 18 ♕a6 ♘xe2+ 19 ♔h1 fails to 19...♕e6, when the black king can escape to e7. The correct response is 17 ♘2f3 with a slight advantage.

17 a4!

This is no time to look back! This pawn advance is objectively the best move.

17...♔b8?!

Playing with fire. After 17...♖dg8 18 a5 ♘xa5 19 ♕a6+ ♔d8 20 ♕xa7 ♔e8! Black can transfer his king to safety, for example 21 ♘b5 ♗xb5 22 ♕b8+ ♕d8 23 ♗xb5+ ♔e7 24 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 25 ♗b2, and White has only a small advantage.

18 a5! ♘xa5 19 ♕a6 ♔a8?

This seems to have been the decisive mistake. It was obligatory to play 19...♗xd4 20 cxd4 ♔a8, although after 21 ♗b2!, with the idea of 21...♗c8 22 ♕b5!, White keeps a strong initiative for the pawn.

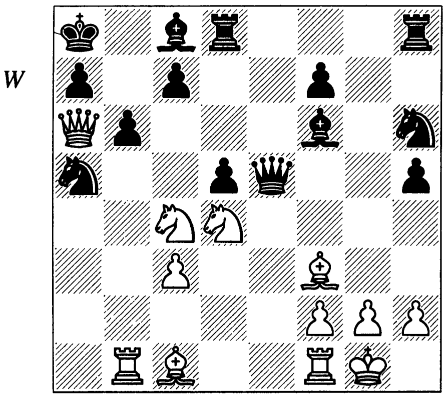
20 e5!

Giving more air to the pieces.

20...♕xe5

20...dxe5 loses to 21 ♗f3+ ♔b8 22 ♕xa5 exd4 23 ♕xa7+ ♔xa7 24 ♖a1+.

21 ♗f3+ d5 22 ♘c4! ♗c8



After 22...♘xc4 White would have had a choice between:

a) 23 ♕xc4! ♗c8 (23...♗g4 24 ♖a1 ♗xf3 25 ♘c6 wins) 24 ♕a4! a5 (24...♗b7 25 ♘b5 a6 26 ♗f4 also wins) 25 ♘c6 ♗d7 (or 25...♕xc3 26 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 27 ♗b2) 26 ♗f4 ♕xc3 (26...♕e6 fails to 27 ♕b5) 27 ♗xd5 and wins; or

b) 23 ♖a1 ♘a5 24 ♖xa5! bxa5 25 ♘c6 ♗xc6 26 ♗e3! ♕xe3 (forced) 27 ♕xc6+ ♔b8 28 fxe3 ♖d6 29 ♖b1+ ♔c8 30 ♕b7+ ♔d7 31 ♗xd5 with a clear edge.

23 ♕xa5! ♕xd4!

You don't see this kind of mutual queen sacrifice very often, do you? Of course 23...bxa5? loses immediately to 24 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 25 ♘c6.

24 ♕a2! ♕xc3

Both 24...♕d3 25 ♗e3 and 24...♕h4 25 g3 also lose quickly.

25 ♗e3!

It was not too late to fall into a clever trap: 25 ♗b2 ♕xf3!! 26 gxf3 ♖hg8+ 27 ♔h1 dxc4 28 ♗xf6? ♗b7 and Black wins! Although White has now sacrificed three pawns, he has tremendous threats. Black's monarch is worth more than his queen.

25...♗b7

If 25...♖hg8 then the simplest is 26 ♖fc1 ♕d3 27 ♗xb6 and White wins.

26 ♗xb6! cxb6 27 ♘xb6+ ♔b8 28 ♘xd5 1-0

Now 28...♕xf3 29 gxf3 ♖hg8+ 30 ♔h1 ♗d4 31 ♕c4 is hopeless for Black, so he resigned. This game was awarded the first brilliancy prize at the 1995 Biel Festival.

Game 61

Salov – Shirov

Amsterdam 1995

The game was annotated in September 1995 and published in *New In Chess*.

Before this game I was not in a very ambitious frame of mind: I was Black and all my five previous Black encounters with Valery had ended peacefully (despite various degrees of struggle).

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♗b4 3 ♘d5 ♗e7

When I played this move for the first time, against Ehlvest at the 1990 Manila Interzonal, I lost in twenty-odd moves and people looked at me as if I needed a doctor, but nowadays it is perfectly respectable. Recently it was christened the 'Shirov variation' by *New in Chess* in one of their yearbooks, but this is mistaken and I would like to put the record straight. The move 3...♗e7 was discovered by the Moldavian trainer Viacheslav Chebanenko; the earliest game in which it appears on my database is Katalymov-N. Popov, Erevan 1977, and Nikolai Popov used to be one of Chebanenko's pupils.

4 e3 ♘f6!?

This was not, as I believed at the time, a novelty, but is perhaps an improvement on 4...d6, which I played against Azmaiparashvili in the 1994 Moscow Olympiad.

5 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 6 ♘e2 d5!?

Finally we see a new move. My intention was to play something similar to the 'Anti-Sicilian' line 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 e6, etc., but with colours reversed. The game Psakhis-Afek, Hertzliya 1993, went 6...0-0 7 ♘c3 c6 8 d4 d6, but Black was unable to equalize completely.

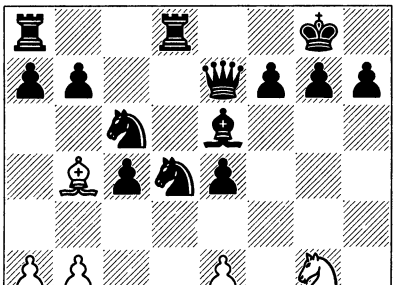
7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 a3 0-0 9 ♘g3!

In the aforementioned Sicilian line Black's knight usually finds itself on c6 after an exchange of the bishop on b5 for Black's other knight. Here it looks better for White to place his knight on g3 rather than c3.

9...c5 10 b3 ♘c6 11 ♗b2 ♗e6 12 ♕c2 ♖fd8!?

This move may not be so bad but it does look a little risky. 'Normal' was 12...♖ac8 to meet 13 ♗b5 with 13...f6.

13 ♗b5



I saw this move right after playing 12...♖fd8 and at first I was cursing myself, though I found a good reply after some thought. Instead of 13 ♗b5, it was dangerous for White to play 13 ♖c1 ♖ac8 14 ♕xc5 ♕h4!, while 13 ♗d3 h6 14 ♗e4 ♖ac8 would have led to an unclear position.

13...♘a5!

When you don't have a good defence you must attack! 13...f6? 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 ♘e4! ♗f5 16 d3 would have been strategically very bad for Black.

14 ♗xe5?

Salov admitted after the game that he had simply overlooked my reply! After 14 0-0 ♘b6! Black would have assumed the initiative, so White should have played 14 ♖b1, when 14...f6 leads to an unclear position.

14...♗d7 15 ♗c3

The only move. 14 ♗xd7 loses immediately to 14...♕xe5.

15...♗xb5 16 ♗xa5 ♘f4!?

I couldn't see anything clear after 16...b6 17 ♗c3:

a) 17...♘f4 18 ♕f5! ♘xg2+ (18...♘d3+ 19 ♔f1) 19 ♔d1 is also very complicated;

b) 17...♘xc3 18 dxc3 ♗d3 19 ♕b2.

Since I was afraid of losing my advantage in that line, I decided to sacrifice the exchange. Perhaps I was overestimating my chances, but there was already little time to think. When I played 16...♘f4 I had about twenty minutes left for 24 moves.

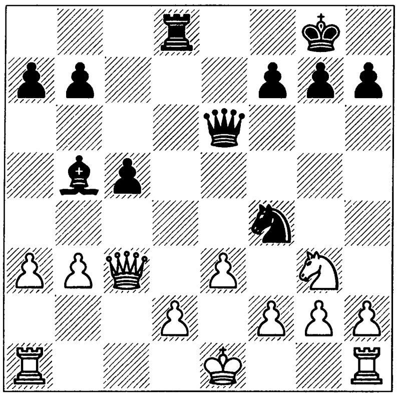
17 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 18 ♕c3!

A surprise. I had been counting on 18 0-0-0? ♘d3+ 19 ♔b1 ♘xf2 when Black is on top. Now 18...♘d3+ is silly due to 19 ♔f1.

18...♕e6! *(D)*

The critical position. Here Salov also started running short of time. Obviously in mutual time-pressure it is much more pleasant to attack than defend and the extra material doesn't count for so much at the moment. After the game Valery admitted that he had been feeling quite pessimistic at this stage, and this may help to explain his next error.

W



19 f3?

Now Black is clearly on top, although he still has to be very precise. Of course my next few moves were not based on much calculation and I am very glad that they were okay. Instead of 19 f3?, White had to play 19 ♔d1! ♘d3 20 ♖f1 ♘e5! 21 ♖g1 (21 f4 ♗xf1 22 fxe5 ♗xg2 is clearly better for Black.) 21...♖d3! 22 ♕xc5, although after 22...♖xb3!, with the idea of 23 ♕xa7 h6!, Black's attack looks very dangerous. Still, it is very difficult for me to give a deep analysis or clear assessment of this position.

19...♖d3 20 ♕xc5 ♘xg2+!

This is stronger than 20...♖xe3+ 21 ♔d1! (not 21 ♕xe3? ♘xg2+ 22 ♔f2 ♘xe3 23 dxe3 ♕xb3 with a clear edge for Black) and now:

a) 21...♖xb3? 22 ♕d4! ♗e2+ 23 ♘xe2 ♕xe2+ 24 ♔c2! ♘e6 25 ♕e4! ♕xe4+ (25...♕b5 26 ♖hb1 ♖xb1 27 ♖xb1 ♕c5+ 28 ♔b2 is also better for White) 26 fxe4 ♘d4+ 27 ♔d1 ♖b2 28 ♖c1 h6 29 ♖f1! and White has good winning chances;

b) 21...♕xb3+ 22 ♕c2 ♘xg2 23 ♕xb3 ♖xb3 24 a4 ♗c6 25 ♖g1 with an unclear endgame.

21 ♔d1

Of course not 21 ♔f2? ♖xd2+ 22 ♔g1 ♘h4 and White is mated.

21...♘xe3+ 22 ♔c1 b6! 23 ♕c7

The bishop is taboo: 23 ♕xb5 ♕c8+ wins.

23...♖d6! 24 ♕b8+

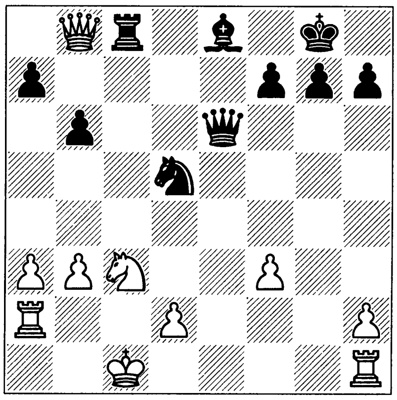
Again the only move.

24...♗e8 25 ♘e4

Tougher resistance would have been offered by 25 ♖a2, although after the further moves 25...♖c6+ 26 ♔b2 ♖c8! 27 ♕xc8 (27 ♕xa7 ♖c2+ 28 ♔a1 ♕xb3 wins) 27...♕xc8 28 dxe3 ♕e6! Black has very good winning chances.

25...♖c6+ 26 ♘c3 ♘d5! 27 ♖a2 ♖c8

W



28 ♕g3?

The last mistake, with his flag hanging. I was less sure about the consequences of the line 28 ♕xa7 ♘xc3 29 dxc3 ♕xb3 30 ♖b2 (30 ♖c2? ♗a4 31 ♖b2 ♕xa3 wins) 30...♕xc3+ 31 ♔b1, but the post-mortem and my home analysis showed that although after

a) 31...♕d3+?! 32 ♔a1 (but not 32 ♔a2? ♕d5+ 33 ♔b1 ♗d7 and wins) 32...♕xf3 33 ♖e1 f6 (33...♖a8 34 ♖e3! ♕d1+ 35 ♖b1 ♕d4+ 36 ♖b2 leads to an unclear position) 34 ♕e7! ♖a8 35 ♖e3 ♕h1+ 36 ♖b1 ♕xh2 37 ♖d3! White has some counterplay, Black can play

b) 31...♗c6! 32 ♕e7 (the only move) 32...♕d3+ 33 ♔a1 ♖a8 34 ♕b4 (again there is nothing else) 34...♖xa3+ 35 ♖a2 ♖xa2+ 36 ♔xa2 ♗d5+ 37 ♔b2 ♕xf3 38 ♖e1 ♕f2+ 39 ♔c1 h6 and Black should win sooner or later.

28...♘xc3 29 dxc3 ♕xb3

Now 29 ♖b2 fails to 29...♕xa3 30 ♔b1 f6 with the inevitable ...♗g6+, so the game is over.

30 ♖c2 ♗a4 31 ♕f2 ♕xa3+ 32 ♔b1 ♗xc2+ 33 ♕xc2 ♖xc3 0-1

Game 62
Shirov – Piket
Amsterdam 1995

The game was annotated in September 1995 and published in *New In Chess*.

Sometimes analysing the game gives even more pleasure than the game itself. This is what I felt while uncovering the mysteries of the variation 23...♕c5 24 ♗g5!. I should mention that no playing program will ever be able to suggest 24 ♗g5 as the strongest move, although I was still using Fritz in my analysis.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5

Offering a Botvinnik variation, as usual.

5...♘bd7

Not this time! Having reached a better position against me with the Cambridge Springs in the sixth game of our match in Aruba earlier in the year, Jeroen obviously had confidence in it.

6 e3 ♕a5 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♕d2 ♗b4 9 ♖c1 0-0 10 ♗d3 h6 11 ♗h4 ♖e8!?

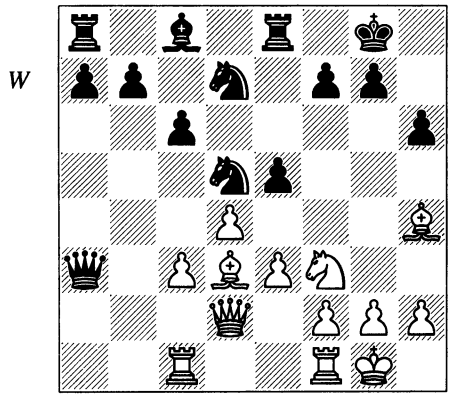
Formally a novelty, although its idea is similar to the immediate 11...e5.

12 a3

I believe that this pawn sacrifice is the best way for White to fight for the initiative. The line 12 0-0 e5 seems equal to me.

12...♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♕xa3 14 0-0 e5

Another way to play is passive defence with 14...♕f8!?



15 ♘xe5

I didn't like the position after 15 dxe5?! ♕c5, with the idea of 16...a5 and 17...a4. Black can annoy White a lot.

15...♘xe5 16 dxe5

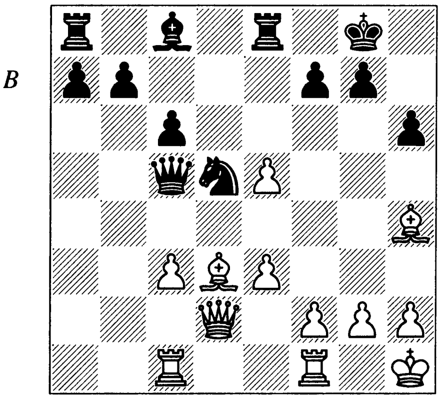
It is odd that this exact same position could have arisen in Bogolyubov-Alekhine, World Championship match 1929, after the moves 11...e5 12 a3 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♕xa3 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 dxe5 ♖e8, had Bogolyubov played 16 0-0 instead of 16 ♗g3, after which he lost hopelessly. The plan I found over the board is more logical because the bishop is very strong on the h4-d8 diagonal.

16...♕c5

I intuitively felt that after 16...♖xe5 17 e4 ♘b6 18 f4 I would have had sufficient compensation for the pawn, though it is hard to support this assessment with variations.

17 ♔h1!

Here too 17 ♗g3 ♗e6 would have given Black excellent piece co-ordination, so White offers the pawn again.



17...♗e6!?

... and Black still doesn't take it! Of course after 17...♖xe5 18 e4 White has sufficient compensation, e.g. 18...♖h5?! 19 ♗g3 ♘f6 20 ♖ce1! with a clear advantage.

18 e4 ♘b6

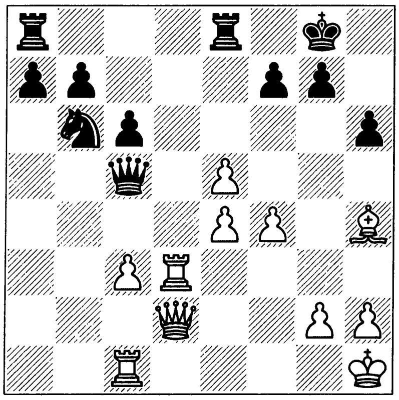
It would not have been good for Black to cover the h4-d8 diagonal with 18...♘e7, in view of 19 f4 ♖ad8 20 ♕e2!, and if

20...♗g4 21 ♕xg4 ♖xd3 then 22 e6! is very good for White.

19 f4 ♗c4 20 ♖f3

A move with strong psychological overtones: no-one likes to see the enemy pieces encroaching on their king.

20...♗xd3 21 ♖xd3 *(D)*



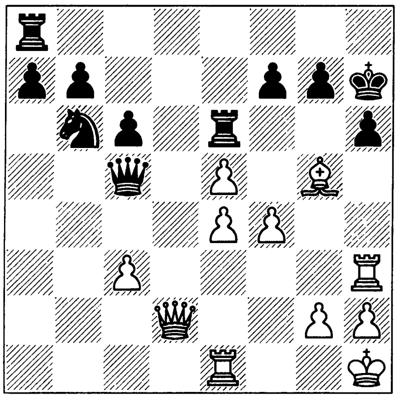
21...♕c4?

A serious mistake. After 21...♔h7 I don't see anything concrete for White, although I still prefer his position.

22 ♖e1 ♔h7 23 ♖h3 ♖e6

This move allows White to win almost by force.

Correct was 23...♕c5 as the queen is a good defender on f8. White then continues 24 ♗g5!



Black has now several possibilities but it seems to me that he cannot defend himself, e.g.

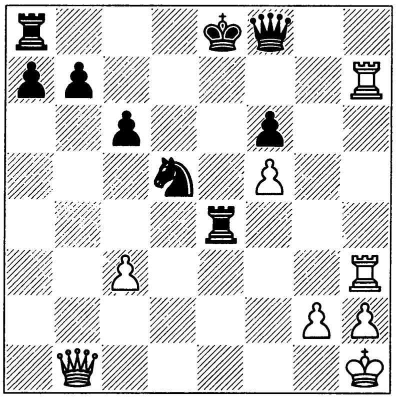
a) 24...♘c4 is met by 25 ♕d7! ♕f2 26 ♖g1 ♔g8 27 ♗xh6 gxh6 28 ♕g4+ ♔f8 29 ♖xh6 with a decisive attack;

b) 24...♕f8 and now the correct way is not the direct

b1) 25 f5? ♘c4 26 ♕f4 ♘xe5 27 f6 ♖e6 28 ♖f1 (28 fxg7 ♕xg7 29 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 30 ♖xh6+ ♕xh6 31 ♕xe5 ♖g8! is unclear) 28...♖ae8 and Black holds on, for example 29 fxg7 ♕xg7 30 ♗f6 ♕g6 31 ♖g3 ♖xf6 32 ♕xf6 ♕xf6 33 ♖xf6 a5 with excellent compensation for the exchange; but

b2) 25 ♖f1! Just bringing one more piece into the action. Black is now helpless, for instance 25...♔g8 (25...♖e6 26 f5 ♖xe5 27 f6 wins) 26 ♕e2! ♖e6 (or 26...hxg5 27 ♕h5 f6 28 fxg5 ♖xe5 29 ♕h7+ ♔f7 30 ♖xf6+ winning) 27 f5 ♖xe5 28 ♗f4 ♖a5 29 f6 g5 30 ♗d6 ♕xd6 31 ♖xh6 and mate is unavoidable;

c) 24...♔g8 Clearly the toughest defence. Now White should go for a long and sometimes not even forced line starting with the piece sacrifice, 25 ♗xh6!, followed by 25...gxh6 26 f5! ♕f8 27 ♖xh6 ♖xe5 28 ♖h5! (but not 28 ♕g5+?! ♕g7 29 ♕h4 ♘d5! with an unclear position) 28...f6 29 ♕a2+ ♘d5 (not 29...♔g7? 30 ♖e3 and wins or 29...♕f7? 30 ♖h8+ ♔g7 31 ♖h7+ and wins) 30 ♖e3! ♔f7 31 ♖h7+ ♔e8 32 ♖eh3 ♖xe4 (or 32...♘f4 33 ♖3h4 ♖d8 34 h3 ♖xe4 35 ♖h8 and wins) 33 ♕b1!



Initially I finished my analysis at this position but later I realized that Black still has a resource, i.e. 33...♘xc3 34 ♖xc3

♕b4! (not 34...♖e7 35 ♖ch3 ♖xh7 36 ♖xh7 and White wins outright) Now White has to find the very precise 35 ♕d1! (the rook endgame after 35 ♖c1?! ♕xb1 36 ♖xb1 ♖d8 37 ♖h8+ ♔e7 38 ♖xb7+ ♖d7 39 ♖h7+ ♔e8 40 ♖b8+ ♖d8 is just drawn because exchanging one pair of rooks doesn't give White any winning prospects) 35...♔f8 (35...♕d4? 36 ♖c1 wins for White) 36 ♕d2! (36 ♖h8+ ♔f7) 36...♔g8 37 ♖h6! and it seems that he finally breaks through Black's defences according to the following lines:

c1) 37...♔f7 38 h3! (38 ♕a2+? ♔e7 39 ♖h7+ ♔d6 40 ♖d3+ ♖d4 41 ♕e6+ ♔c5 42 ♕e7+ ♔b6 is unclear) and now:

c11) 38...♕d4 39 ♖h7+ ♔g8 40 ♕h6! ♖e1+ 41 ♔h2 ♕g1+ (41...♕e5+ 42 ♖g3+) 42 ♔g3 winning;

c12) 38...♖g8 39 ♕a2+ ♔e7 40 ♖h7+ ♔d6 41 ♖d3+ ♔c5 42 ♕f2+ ♖d4 43 ♖xb7 ♕c4 44 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 45 ♕e1! winning;

c2) 37...♕b1+ 38 ♖c1 ♕xc1+ 39 ♕xc1 ♖ae8 40 ♖h8+! ♔xh8 41 ♕h6+ ♔g8 42 ♕g6+ ♔f8 43 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 44 ♕g6+ ♔f8 45 h3 (45 g4? ♖e1+ 46 ♔g2 ♖8e3! 47 ♕d6+ ♔f7 is only a draw) 45...♖4e7 46 f6 ♖f7 47 g4 ♖e2 48 ♕f5 and the queen and pawns mate the black king at the end of it all. Such a deep analysis would never be made by a computer program by itself, but neither is it easy for a human to check everything without Fritz4 or Chess Genius. I think this is a good example of combining two brains to bring the art of chess investigation to an entirely new level.

24 ♗f6! gxf6 25 f5 fxe5

Everything is forced.

26 fxe6 ♕xe6 27 ♖f1 ♘c4?!

This loses immediately, but 27...♖f8 wouldn't have changed the result because of 28 ♖f5! ♔g7 (28...♘c4 29 ♕f2 ♔g7 30 ♖g3+ ♔h7 31 ♖f6 also wins) 29 ♖xe5 ♘c4 30 ♖g3+ ♔h7 31 ♖xe6 ♘xd2 32 ♖e7 a5 33 ♖d3 ♘b3 34 ♖f3 ♘c5 35 ♖f5 b6 36 ♖fxf7+ ♖xf7 37 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 38 ♖c7 ♘xe4 39 ♖xc6 b5 40 c4 b4 41 ♖a6.

28 ♖xh6+ ♕xh6 29 ♖xf7+ ♔g6 30 ♖f6+ ♔xf6 31 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 32 ♕g7+ ♔d6 33 ♕xb7

It would have been more precise to play 33 ♕f6+ ♔c5 34 ♕e7+, winning a piece.

33...♘b6 34 h4 ♔c5 35 h5 a5 36 h6 1-0

Game 63
Stefansson – Shirov
Clichy (European Club Cup) 1995

The game was annotated in October 1995 and published in several magazines.

This game has an unusual background. In August that year in Amsterdam I had had an unfortunate last round encounter against Judit Polgar in the Pirc Defence. A few hours after that game I started looking through its opening with Julian Hodgson and at some point Hannes Stefansson joined our analysis (both were playing there in the open tournament). One month later I was due to play in the European Cup and a short time before that event I heard that Stefansson would be my opponent in the first match. Still, I did not know the colours and I decided not to prepare at all. Just before our game I learned that I would be Black and didn't feel confident enough to play a Sicilian. I had simply forgotten about the post-mortem in Amsterdam ...

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3 c6 4 ♗c4 d6 5 ♕f3 e6 6 ♗f4!?

Here I began to remember that this had been Hannes' suggestion then. Judit played 6 ♘ge2 which isn't very convincing.

6...b5 7 ♗b3 a5

I didn't feel like taking the 'poisoned' pawn with 7...♗xd4 because after 8 0-0-0 ♗c5 9 ♕g3 White has good compensation.

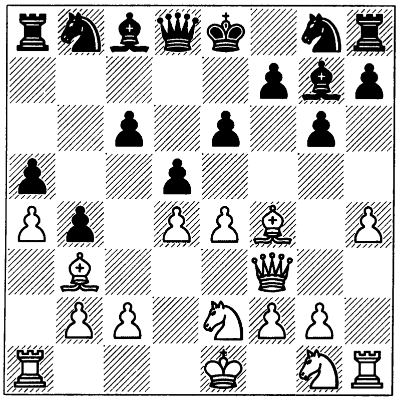
8 a4 b4 9 ♘ce2 d5

After 9...♘f6?!, 10 h4! (and if 10...h5 11 ♗g5) gives White good attacking chances

10 h4!?

A new move. 10 e5 ♘d7 would have been quite unclear while 10 0-0-0 has been played before and is similar to the game.

B



10...dxe4 11 ♕xe4 ♘f6 12 ♕f3 ♗b7 13 0-0-0 ♘bd7

Black is intending 14...♘d5 and 15...c5.

14 ♕h3 c5 15 ♘f3

Interesting was 15 dxc5, after which I mistakenly intended to play 15...♘d5?!, which brings White a huge advantage after 16 ♗d6 ♕f6 17 ♘d4 ♖c8 18 ♘gf3 ♖xc5 (18...♘xc5? 19 ♗e5) 19 ♖he1! Stronger is Stefansson's post-mortem suggestion of 15...♘e4! and it is not easy to see anything better for White than 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 c6 ♕f6! 18 cxd7+ ♔f7 19 ♕b3 and now:

a) 19...♘xf2 is not good because of 20 ♘h3! ♘xd1 21 ♘g5+! (21 ♖xd1? h6 is good for Black) 21...♔e7 22 ♖xd1 ♗d5 23 ♖xd5 ♕xb2+ (23...exd5 24 ♕xd5 ♕xb2+ 25 ♔d2 wins for White) 24 ♕xb2 ♗xb2+ 25 ♔xb2 exd5 26 ♗e5 and White has a very pleasant endgame. Much stronger is

b) 19...♘c5! 20 ♕c4 (20 ♕a2? ♗xg2 21 ♖h2 b3 22 cxb3 ♗d5 and Black is on top) 20...♕xb2+ 21 ♔d2 ♗c3+ 22 ♘xc3 ♕xc3+ 23 ♕xc3 bxc3+ 24 ♔xc3 ♗xg2 25 ♖h2 ♗d5 and Black is a little better.

15...♗a6

I was already approaching severe time-pressure, so I wanted to go for something relatively (compared to other variations!) forced and 'simple'. Again 15...♘e4!? (which was also suggested by Stefansson after the game) was very interesting. The position after 16 ♗e3 is too complicated for me to give a clear assessment or concrete analysis.

16 ♗xe6!

I think that this is stronger than 16 d5 after which, however, I would have had a tough (taking into account less than half an hour left) choice between:

a) 16...♗xe2 17 dxe6 0-0 (17...♗xd1?? 18 exf7+ wins for White) 18 ♖de1 (18 exd7? c4 is better for Black) 18...♗xf3 19 e7 ♕c8 20 exf8♕+ ♘xf8! (not 20...♗xf8?! 21 ♕xf3 c4 22 ♗a2 b3 23 ♗b1 c3 [or 23...♘c5 24 c3] 24 cxb3 ♗b4 25 ♗d3 with a plus for White) 21 ♕xf3 c4 22 ♗a2 b3 23 ♗b1 ♘e6 24 c3 ♘xf4 25 ♕xf4 ♘g4 26 ♕g3 ♗h6+ 27 f4 ♕c7! 28 ♖hf1 (28 ♕xg4 ♗xf4+ 29 ♔d1 ♕d6+ 30 ♔e2 h5 31 ♕f3 ♖e8+ 32 ♗e4 f5 33 ♔f1 fxe4 34 ♖xe4 ♖f8 35 ♖d4 ♕xd4! 36 cxd4 ♗c1! 37 ♔e2 ♖xf3 38 ♖xc1 ♖g3 39 ♔f2 ♖d3 is equal) 28...f5 with good compensation for the exchange; or

b) 16...♘xd5! 17 ♗xd5 and now not

b1) 17...♕f6? (which I had been calculating during the game) 18 ♗xa8 ♗xe2 (18...♕xb2+ 19 ♔d2 ♗c3+ 20 ♔e3 ♕xc2 21 ♘c1! wins) 19 ♖xd7 ♕xb2+ 20 ♔d2 ♔xd7 21 ♗b7 ♕c3+ (21...b3 22 ♔xe2 bxc2 23 ♖c1 ♕xb7 24 ♘d2 is also winning for White) 22 ♔xe2 ♕c4+ 23 ♔d1 ♕xf4 24 ♕h2 and White is better; but

b2) 17...exd5!, when neither ...

b21) 18 ♖he1?! 0-0 19 ♖xd5 ♕f6 20 ♖xd7 (20 ♕xd7 ♖fd8 21 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 22 ♗e5 ♗h6+ 23 ♔b1 ♕b6) 20...♕xb2+ 21 ♔d2 (21 ♔d1 b3+) 21...♗c8! winning for Black; nor ...

b22) 18 ♖xd5 ♗c4 (intending 19...♗e6 with a slight plus)

... is what White was hoping for.

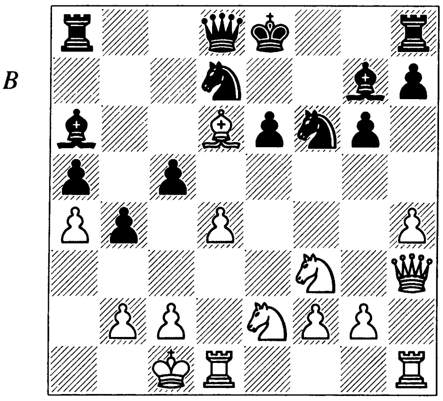
16...0-0

The bishop is taboo after 16...fxe6? 17 ♗d6! *(D)*

White's attack is lethal, since if now 17...♗h6+ then 18 ♘g5.

17 ♗xd7 ♗xe2 18 ♗c6!

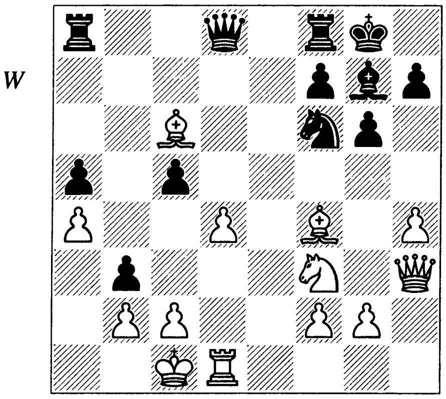
This is what I had missed when playing 15...♗a6: I was counting mainly on 18 dxc5 ♗xf3! (18...♗xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♘e4 20 ♗e3 is slightly better for White) 19 gxf3 ♘xd7 20 ♖d6! (found at home; 20 ♕xd7? ♕f6 and 20 ♗g5 ♕c7 21 ♕xd7 ♕e5, with



an attack, are much weaker) 20...♕c7 21 ♕xd7 ♕xc5 and Black has the initiative in return for only a pawn.

18...♗xd1 19 ♖xd1 c4!?

Offering back the exchange for some positional compensation. 19...♖c8?! would not have been good in view of 20 ♗b7; but 19...b3!?



would have deserved serious attention had I had enough time. Here are some sample variations:

a) 20 cxb3 ♖c8 21 ♗b7 ♖c7 22 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 23 ♗a6 cxd4+ (23...♘e4 24 ♕h2 is unclear) 24 ♗c4 ♘e4 25 ♕h2 ♕xh2 26 ♘xh2 ♘xf2 and Black is slightly better;

b) 20 dxc5 ♕c8 and now:

b1) 21 ♘d4 bxc2 22 ♔xc2 ♘d5!! (the line 22...♖a6 23 ♕xc8 ♖xc8 24 ♔b1 is better for White) 23 ♗xa8 ♕xc5+ 24 ♔b1 ♖xa8 and Black is on top;

b2) 21 ♗xa8 ♕xc5 with compensation;

c) 20 ♗xa8 bxc2 and now:

c1) 21 ♖d2?! ♕xa8 22 ♗d6 ♖e8 23 ♗xc5 (23 dxc5 ♘e4 24 ♖xc2 ♕d5 wins for Black) 23...♕d5 is clearly better for Black;

c2) 21 ♔xc2 ♕xa8 22 ♗d6 ♖c8 and Black is slightly better;

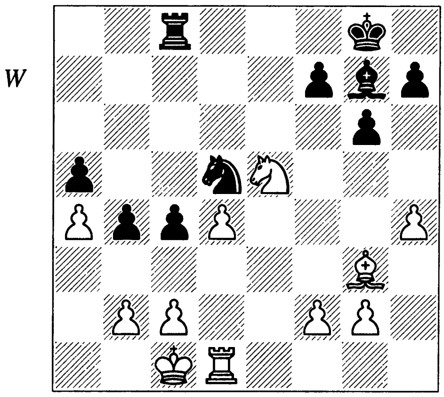
c3) 21 ♖e1! ♕xa8 22 ♗d6 (22 dxc5?! ♘e4 with attacking chances) 22...♖d8 (22...♖c8?! 23 dxc5; while 22...♖e8 23 ♗xc5 is slightly better for White) 23 ♗e7 (23 ♗xc5 ♘e4 and 23 dxc5 ♘e4 both give Black good attacking chances) 23...♖b8 24 ♗d6 ♖d8 with equal chances. Summing up, I conclude that 19...b3!? would have promised Black at least an equal game. The text is more risky but maybe not worse.

20 ♘e5!?

20 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 21 ♘e5 ♕d5 leads to an unclear position.

20...♖c8 21 d5?!

It seems that 21 ♗b7 ♖c7 22 ♕f3 (22 ♘c6 ♕d7 23 ♕xd7 ♖xd7 24 ♘xa5 c3! is unclear) would have been more unpleasant, after which I would have to play 22...♖xb7! (otherwise Black is dead, for instance 22...b3 23 ♘c6 ♕d7 24 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 25 ♗a6; 22...♕b8 23 ♗c6; or 22...♕e8 23 ♗c6 ♕c8 24 d5) 23 ♕xb7 ♕d5 24 ♕xd5 (24 ♘c6?! is precarious due to 24...♔h8! with an attack; while 24 ♕c6 is useless because of 24...♖e8! threatening 25...♖xe5! – it is important to see this when playing 22...♖xb7!) 24...♘xd5 25 ♗g3 ♖c8!



and Black doesn't seem worse to me in spite of the fact that he is a pawn down.

21...♘h5

I spent a lot of important time calculating variations such as 21...♘e4 22 ♕e3 ♘d6 23 g3 and 21...c3 22 b3 ♘e4 23 ♕e3 ♘d2 24 g3, only to realize that they would not have left me much hope of anything good. It was practically at the last moment that the right idea occurred to me.

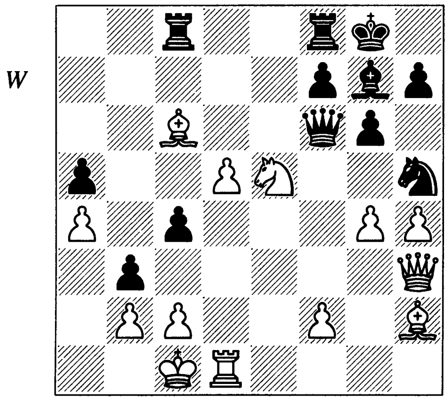
22 ♗h2 b3!!

The strongest move in the game. When I made it I had just five minutes left for the remaining eighteen moves, whereas my opponent still had more than fifteen. Of course, I needed a high level of concentration to play well under these circumstances. I should also mention that 22...♕f6 23 ♘xc4 ♕xf2 24 ♘xa5 would have been slightly better for White.

23 g4?

This turns things in Black's favour. White should have continued 23 ♘xc4 (after 23 c3? ♕f6 24 ♘f3 ♘f4 Black is winning) 23...♗h6+ 24 ♘e3 (24 ♔b1?? ♖xc6 wins) 24...bxc2 25 ♔xc2 ♕b6 and the position is unclear.

23...♕f6!



24 ♕f3?!

Making things still worse. However, after 24 ♘xc4 bxc2! (but not 24...♘f4? 25 ♕xb3 ♘e2+ 26 ♔b1 ♘d4 27 ♕c3 ♘xc6 28 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 29 dxc6 ♖xc6 30 ♘xa5 ♖a6 31 b4, when White has a slight plus) White is clearly in an inferior position:

a) 25 ♔xc2 ♘f4 26 ♕f3 (26 ♕e3 ♘xd5 27 ♗xd5 ♖xc4+ 28 ♗xc4 ♕xb2+ 29 ♔d3 ♖d8+; 26 ♕b3 ♘e2; and 26 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 are all good for Black) 26...♘xd5! 27 ♕xf6 (27 ♗xd5? ♖xc4+) 27...♘xf6 28 ♘xa5 ♘xg4;

b) 25 ♖d2 ♘f4 26 ♕e3 (26 ♕f3 ♘xd5 is also good for Black) 26...♘xd5 27 ♗xd5 ♖xc4 28 ♗e5 ♕xe5 29 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 30 ♗xc4 ♗f4 31 ♔xc2 ♗xd2 32 ♔xd2 ♖d8+ (intending 33 ♔c3 ♖d1).

I might also add that 24 ♕e3?! ♕xh4 25 ♖h1 ♗xe5 26 ♕xe5 ♕xg4 leaves White with no real chance of survival, while 24 gxh5? ♕xf2 loses immediately.

24...♕xh4 25 ♖h1 ♗xe5!

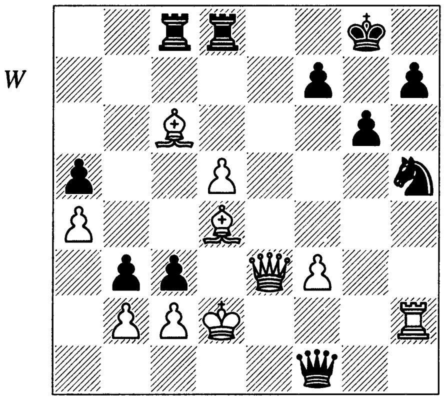
Accuracy is still necessary. 25...♘f6?? was impossible because of 26 ♗f4 and 25...♕g5+ 26 ♕e3 is quite unclear.

26 ♗xe5 ♕g5+ 27 ♕e3 ♕xg4

Black is winning because of his material advantage and threats against the more vulnerable white king. The pair of bishops and the activity of White's major pieces are no longer of any genuine significance.

28 ♗c3

Other tries would also have been hopeless, for example 28 f3 ♕g2 29 ♖h2 ♕f1+ 30 ♔d2 ♖fd8 31 ♗d4 c3+!!



32 bxc3 (or 32 ♕xc3 ♖xd5) 32...b2 33 ♕e5 ♕c1+ 34 ♔e2 ♕xc2+; 28 ♗d6 ♕f5 29 ♕d2 ♖fd8 30 ♗e7 ♖xc6 31 ♗xd8 ♖d6; or finally 28 cxb3 cxb3 29 ♕xb3 ♖fd8 30 ♖d1 ♘f4.

28...♕f5 29 ♔b1

Forced.

29...bxc2+ 30 ♔a2 ♘f4! 31 ♖h4

This throws the game away at once, but variations such as 31 ♗e5 c1♕ 32 ♖xc1 ♘d3 and 31 ♕d4 f6 32 ♕xc4 ♕d3! 33 ♕xf4 ♖xc6 34 dxc6 ♕d5+ would not have changed the result.

31...♘e2!

Not 31...♘d3?? 32 ♕h6 and it is White who wins.

32 ♖h1

Of course, 32 ♕h6 loses to 32...♘xc3+ 33 bxc3 g5.

32...♘xc3+ 33 ♕xc3 ♕d3 34 ♕xd3

If 34 ♖c1 then the simplest is 34...♕xc3 35 bxc3 ♖xc6 36 dxc6 ♖c8.

34...cxd3 35 ♔b3 ♖fd8 0-1

Game 64

Shirov – Leko

Belgrade 1995

The game was annotated in December 1995 and published in various magazines.

Every time I play somebody who answers 1 e4 with 1...e5 I have serious doubts about which opening to choose. This time I went for the Ruy Lopez, despite its complexity, which had always made me afraid to play it.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8 11 ♘g5 ♖f8 12 ♘f3

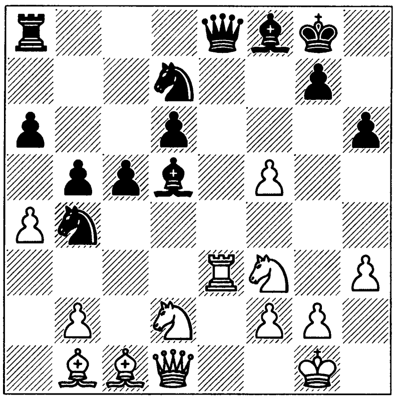
This move repetition is just to cut down the risk of the time-trouble that can easily arise when you don't know the opening well.

12...♖e8 13 a4 h6 14 ♘bd2 ♗f8 15 ♗c2 exd4 16 cxd4 ♘b4 17 ♗b1 c5 18 d5 ♘d7 19 ♖a3 f5 20 exf5 ♗xd5

More common here is 20...♘f6.

21 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 22 ♖e3

I learned afterwards that this logical move is a novelty. 22 ♘h4 was played in Arakhamia-Veroci, Yugoslavia 1991, but it didn't bring White anything special and a draw was agreed a few moves later.



22...♕f7 23 ♘e4 bxa4!?

This unexpected decision caused me some confusion, particularly since I already didn't have much time left. I had thought that by playing 23...♗xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♘f6 25 ♖e6 ♖e8 Black would have equalized completely, but in fact after 26 axb5 ♖xe6 (26...axb5 27 ♕e2 looks rather unpleasant) 27 fxe6 ♕xe6 28 bxa6 ♘xa6 he is stuck with a slightly worse position. Another interesting idea would have been 23...♗a2!?, which Leko suggested after the game.

24 ♘fg5!?

I was so obsessed by the possibility of sacrificing a knight that I almost didn't consider the alternatives. In fact the text just leads to a draw, whereas 24 ♕xa4 ♖e8 (24...♗c6? 25 ♕d1 d5 26 ♘eg5 hxg5 27 ♘xg5 ♕f6 28 ♖e6 ♕d4 29 ♕h5 wins for White) 25 ♗d2! (25 ♘eg5? hxg5 26 ♘xg5 ♖xe3 27 ♘xf7 ♖e1+ 28 ♔h2 ♗xf7 is winning for Black) 25...♗xe4 26 ♗xe4 d5 27 ♗b1 ♖xe3 28 fxe3 would probably have brought White a little advantage.

24...hxg5

Several spectators could not understand why Black didn't play 24...♕xf5. It's true that the shocking

a) 25 ♘h7?! (suggested by Ivanchuk's second Alexander Sulipa) doesn't seem good in view of 25...♕f7! (of course, not 25...♕xh7? 26 ♘c3 and White is better) 26 ♘xf8 (or 26 ♖g3 ♔h8) 26...♖xf8 and White doesn't have enough for the two pawns; but

b) 25 ♗d2! (which in fact I was intending during the game) is much better, when Black has a choice between:

b1) 25...♗b3, which loses to 26 ♖xb3 axb3 27 ♗xb4 cxb4 (or 27...hxg5 28 ♘xc5; 27...♘b6 28 ♗c3) 28 ♘xd6;

b2) 25...hxg5 26 ♗xb4 cxb4 27 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 28 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 29 ♕xa8 with the same outcome; and the clearly stronger

b3) 25...♗c6. But then Sulipa's idea of 26 ♘h7!! really does work! To prove it I had to study this position thoroughly (with the help of Fritz4, to be honest, although I had to find the main ideas by myself!) and here is the analysis:

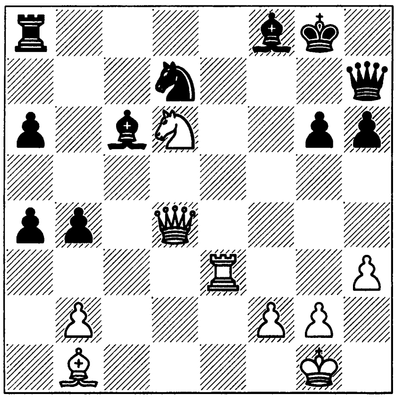
b31) 26...♕d5 27 ♘hf6+!! (the decisive piece sacrifice; 27 ♕g4 is much less clear in view of 27...♔h8 28 ♗c3 ♘e5 29 ♕g3 ♗e7 30 f4 ♕d1+ 31 ♖e1 ♕h5 with the idea of 32 fxe5 ♗h4 33 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 34 e6+ ♕e5) and now Black has two ways to take the knight but they lead to the same thing:

b311) 27...♘xf6 28 ♘xf6+ gxf6 29 ♕g4+ ♕g5 (or 29...♔h8 30 ♖g3 ♕f7 31 ♕h4) 30 ♕e6+ ♔h8 31 ♖g3 ♗d5 (31...♖e8 32 ♕f7) 32 ♗xg5 ♗xe6 33 ♗xf6+ and White wins; or

b312) 27...gxf6 28 ♕g4+ ♔h8 29 ♖g3 ♕f7 30 ♕h4 h5 31 ♗c3 ♗g7 (or 31...♘d5 32 ♘g5 ♕e8 33 ♕e4) 32 ♘xd6 ♕d5 33 ♘f5 ♕d1+ 34 ♔h2 and Black has no defence;

b32) 26...♕xh7 27 ♘xd6! g6 28 ♗xb4! (28 ♖e6? ♘e5! 29 ♖xe5 ♖d8 30 ♗xb4 ♖xd6! 31 ♗a2+ ♔h8 is better for Black) 28...cxb4 29 ♕d4!

B



Black is a piece and a pawn up, but his army is so badly co-ordinated that he cannot stop White's attack, for instance:

b321) 29...♘e5 30 ♖xe5 ♕d7 31 ♕c4+ ♔h8 32 ♖e6! ♗g7 (or 32...♗xd6 33 ♖xg6; 32...♗b5 33 ♕e4) 33 ♖xg6 ♖f8 34 ♗f5; or

b322) 29...♕g7 30 ♕c4+ ♔h7 (30...♔h8 31 ♘f7+ ♔h7 32 ♖g3! wins) 31 ♕xc6 ♖d8 32 ♕c7 ♕xb2 33 ♗xg6+! ♔xg6 34 ♖g3+ ♔h5 (or 34...♔h7 35 ♕xd8) 35 ♘b7! (35 ♕xd8? ♕c1+ 36 ♔h2 ♗xd6 37 ♕e8+ ♔h4 38 ♕xd7 ♕f4! is unclear) 35...♘e5 36 ♘xd8 ♕b1+ 37 ♔h2 ♕f5 38 ♘c6 ♘xc6 39 ♕xc6 ♕f4 40 ♔g1 and White soon gives mate soon;

b33) 26...♕f7. Probably best. Now after 27 ♖g3 Black should play not 27...♔h8 28 ♘xf8 ♗xe4 (28...♖xf8 29 ♗c3 wins for White) 29 ♘xd7 ♗xb1 30 ♗c3 ♕xd7 31 ♕xb1 ♖e8 32 ♖xg7 ♕xg7 33 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 34 ♕d1 where he is losing; but 27...d5 28 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 29 ♗xh6 dxe4 30 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 31 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 32 ♕g4+, and although White holds better chances it is not clear whether he should win. Still, Leko's move (24...hxg5) is better.

25 ♘xg5

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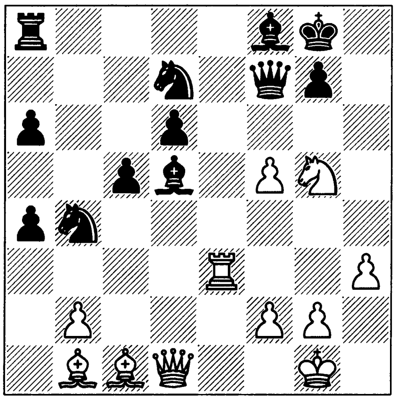

25...♕f6??

But this is horrible. Now White gets a winning position with a simple exchange sacrifice. Instead, 25...♗b3! would have given Black an easy draw since White has nothing better than 26 ♕f3 ♗d5 (26...♕d5? 27 ♗e4) 27 ♕d1 (my original idea of 27 ♕e2 ♗c4 28 ♕g4? ♘f6 29 ♕h4 doesn't work because of 29...♕d5 30 ♖e6 ♕d1+ 31 ♔h2 ♗xe6 32 fxe6 ♕h5, when Black wins) 27...♗b3 28 ♕f3 repeating the position.

26 ♖e6! ♗xe6 27 fxe6 g6

27...♘e5 loses by force to 28 ♕h5 ♕h6 29 ♗h7+ ♔h8 30 ♘f7+ ♘xf7 31 ♗xh6 ♘xh6 32 ♗b1 c4 33 g4 ♘d3 34 g5.

28 exd7 ♖d8 29 ♕g4!?

29 ♗a2+! ♘xa2 30 ♕d5+ ♔h8 31 ♘f7+ ♔g7 32 ♗h6+! ♔h7 33 ♗g5 was more effective but the text doesn't spoil anything.

29...♗e7 30 h4!

This decides the game, whereas 30 ♘e6 ♔f7 would have prolonged it. Now both the g6 pawn and the black king are terribly weak.

30...d5 31 ♘f3 ♔g7 32 ♗g5 ♕xb2

Or 32...♕d6 33 ♗f4 and wins.

33 ♗h6+ 1-0

Game 65

Shirov – Timman

Belgrade 1995

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5

After a successful try against Peter Leko in the same tournament I decided that it was already time to employ this opening regularly.

3...a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗b7 14 d5

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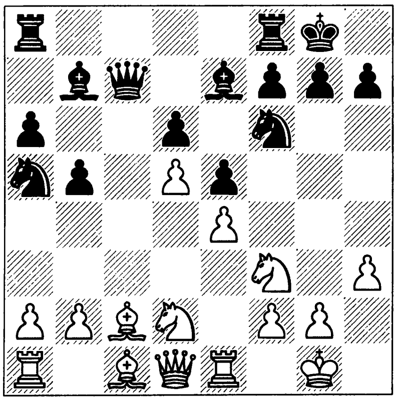


A logical move when you don't know much theory. Now the knight on a5 and the bishop on b7 are not the best pieces on the board.

14...♖ac8 15 ♗b1 ♘h5 16 ♘f1 ♘f4 17 ♗xf4

A new move, although the known move 17 ♔h2 (Thipsay-P. Littlewood, Commonwealth, Championship 1985), might have been a better idea. I nearly blundered with 17 ♘e3?? ♕xc1 and when I finally saw this I played my move almost without thinking.

17...exf4 18 ♗d3 ♗f6 19 ♕e2

Consistent but allowing Black a nice opportunity. 19 ♖b1 should have been preferred, with a slight plus, and if now 19...♘c4 then the simple 20 ♗xc4.

19...♕c5! 20 ♖ac1 ♕b4

I couldn't believe that Black could allow

21 b3

so easily. But the queen stands excellently on b4.

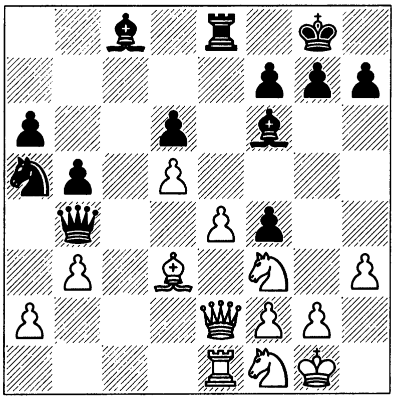
21...♖fe8

Both 21...g6!? and 21...h6!? also deserved attention

22 ♖xc8 ♗xc8!?

During the game I thought that this was bad because of the way the game went. But in fact things are not so simple. 22...♖xc8 23 ♖b1 (but not 23 e5?! dxe5 24 ♘xe5 g6, when Black holds a small pull) would have led to quieter play.

W



23 ♕c2! ♕c3?

This is a mistake. After the game Timman pointed out that he had a very interesting double pawns sacrifice, i.e. 23...♘b7! 24 ♕c6 ♖d8 25 ♕xa6 ♘c5 26 ♕xb5 ♕c3, when White has no advantage, for example:

a) 27 ♗e2 ♘xe4 28 ♗c4 ♗d7 29 ♕b6 ♘g5 30 ♘1d2 ♘xf3+ 31 ♘xf3 g5 32 ♗e2 ♗f5 with compensation;

b) 27 ♗c4 ♗a6 (27...♗xh3? 28 e5 ♗d7 29 ♕b6 wins for White) 28 ♕c6 (28 ♕b6 ♗xc4 29 e5 ♗xd5 30 exf6 ♕xf6 is equal) 28...♗xc4 29 bxc4 ♕xc4 and again Black has sufficient compensation;

c) 27 ♗b1 ♗xh3 28 b4 (28 ♘1h2 ♗c8 is also fine for Black) and now not

c1) 28...♗d7? 29 ♕b6 ♘a4 (29...♗g4 30 bxc5 ♗xf3 31 e5!! dxe5 32 gxf3 ♕xe1 33 c6 wins for White) 30 ♕xd6 ♗g4 31 ♕xf4 ♗xf3 32 ♖e3! ♕xb4 (or 32...♕c1 33 ♖xf3 ♕xb1 34 e5) 33 ♖b3 ♕e1 34 ♕xf3 ♘c3 35 ♗d3 ♘xa2 36 ♖b7 with a clear plus for White; but

c2) 28...♘d7 29 ♘1h2 ♘e5 30 gxh3 ♘xf3+ 31 ♘xf3 ♕xf3 32 ♕d3 ♕h5 with excellent compensation.

24 ♖c1 ♕xc2 25 ♖xc2

Now White is clearly better.

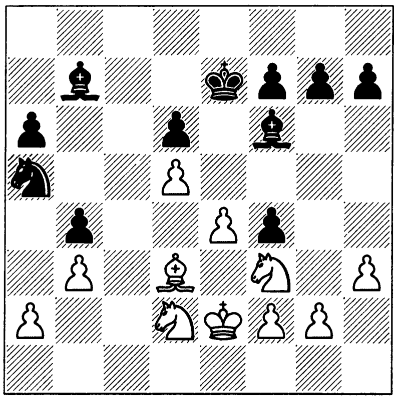
25...b4 26 ♖c7

Black's problem is still the same as in the opening – the knight and the light-squared bishop.

26...♗b7 27 ♘1d2 ♔f8 28 ♔f1 ♖e7

28...h6 29 ♖d7 would have led to a similar position.

29 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 30 ♔e2



White's plan is very simple – to grab the pawn on b4. He only needs to be careful about ...f7-f5.

30...♗c3 31 ♘b1 ♗a1 32 ♘e1 f5

At home I discovered that Black could have put up tougher resistance by sacrificing a piece, i.e. 32...♗d4 33 ♘c2 ♗c5 34 ♘d2 f5 35 a3 fxe4 36 ♗xe4 bxa3 37 b4 a2 38 bxa5 (38 bxc5 dxc5 is less clear because the black king might become very active) 38...♗d4 39 ♘b3 ♗b2, but it seems to me that White is still winning after 40 ♔d3 ♗c8 41 ♔c4 ♗d7 42 ♔b4.

33 ♘c2 fxe4 34 ♗xe4 ♗f6 35 ♘xb4 h6 36 ♗d3 ♗d4 37 ♘c2

Going for the piece, e.g. 37...♗e5 38 b4.

37...♗a7 38 ♘c3 1-0

But now that is not even necessary, as the text is a lot easier. It is not every day that I win a positional game like this.

Game 66

Van der Sterren – Shirov

Bundesliga 1995/96

The game was annotated in December 1996 and published in various magazines.

Although nowadays I am less successful in the Bundesliga than in my first season, every year I manage to score 2 out of 2 in at least one weekend. Thanks to this game (and incredible luck in the Saturday one!) I kept up the tradition.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 e3

Normally Paul doesn't mind playing 5 ♗g5, but perhaps he didn't wish to enter the Botvinnik variation at 9 a.m.

5...♘bd7 6 ♗d3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 a6

Switching from my usual 8...♗b7.

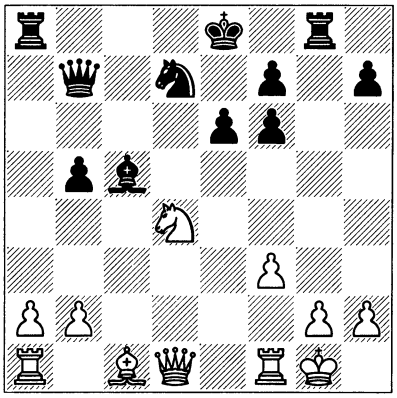
9 e4 c5 10 e5 cxd4 11 ♘xb5 axb5 12 exf6 gxf6 13 0-0 ♕b6 14 ♗e4

Nowadays 14 ♕e2 is considered more critical.

14...♗b7 15 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 16 ♘xd4 ♖g8 17 f3 ♗c5!?

In one sense this move is a novelty, although it ultimately leads to a known variation. The other move order is 17...♘e5 18 ♕e2 (18 ♘b3 doesn't seem promising in view of 18...♖d8 19 ♕e2 ♕d5 20 ♗e3?! ♕c4 21 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 22 ♗c1 f5, when Black was slightly better in Levin-Yasinsky, Novgorod open 1995) 18...♗c5 19 ♗e3 (Kamsky-Kramnik, Linares 1994).

W



18 ♗e3 ♘e5 19 ♕e2 ♕b6!?

This really is a new and aggressive continuation. The Kamsky-Kramnik game went 19...♖d8.

20 ♖fd1

This allows Black to keep on taking risks. 20 ♘c2 ♔e7 would just have been equal.

20...♖a4!?

The 'normal' 20...♖d8 21 ♘c2 ♗xe3+ 22 ♘xe3 ♘c4 23 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8, with equal chances, seemed too boring to me.

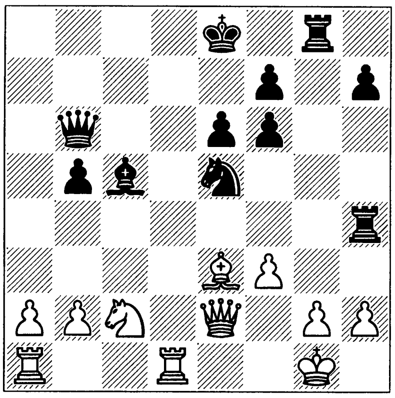
21 ♘c2

During the game I was slightly afraid of the pawn sacrifice 21 ♖ac1!? ♘c4 (it may be safer to play 21...♖c4!? 22 ♖xc4 bxc4 with equality) 22 ♗f2 ♖xa2 23 ♖c2, but now it seems to me that after 23...♖g5 (23...e5 24 ♔h1 offers White excellent compensation for the pawn) 24 b4!? (this is the idea that I feared) 24...♖xc2 25 ♕xc2 ♗xb4 26 ♕xh7 ♖d5 Black has a good game.

21...♖h4!? *(D)*

Continuing with the same strategy.

W



22 ♕f2!

I almost disregarded this move in my calculations, thinking that it would lose in exactly the same way as happened in the game. But in reality it is stronger than 22 ♔h1, which is what I thought White should do. Then Black has a nice rook sacrifice, i.e. 22...♕b8! 23 h3 (23 g3? loses to 23...♖xg3 24 ♗xc5 ♘xf3 25 ♗d6 ♘xh2! and the continuation 23 ♗xc5 ♖xh2+ 24 ♔g1 ♖hxg2+ 25 ♕xg2 ♘xf3+ 26 ♔f2 ♖xg2+ 27 ♔xg2 ♘h4+ also seems to be in Black's favour) 23...♗xe3 (but not 23...♕b7 24 ♗xc5 ♘xf3 25 ♘e3 ♖xh3+ 26 gxh3 ♘g1+ 27 ♕g2 ♖xg2 28 ♘xg2 ♘xh3 29 ♖d2 and White wins) 24 ♘xe3 ♖g3! 25 ♘f1 (25 ♕f2 ♘xf3 26 ♘f1 is the same) 25...♘xf3 26 ♕f2 (not 26 ♘xg3? ♕xg3) 26...♖hxh3+ 27 gxh3 ♖xh3+ 28 ♔g2 ♘g5 29 ♕d4 ♕b7+ 30 ♔f2 ♕f3+ 31 ♔e1 ♔f8!, maintaining very good attacking chances despite the material losses.

22...♕c7!?

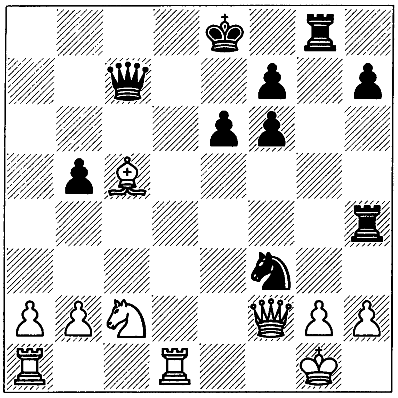
Going straight for the white king! 22...♖c4 23 ♔h1, with a slight plus, would have been in contradiction of my previous play.

23 ♗xc5!

This should yield White a little more than 23 f4, which leads to a forced draw after 23...♖xh2 24 fxe5 ♕xe5 25 ♗xc5 ♕h5 26 g3 ♖h1+ 27 ♔g2 ♕h3+ 28 ♔f3 ♕f5+ (28...♕g4+ 29 ♔e3 ♖xd1 30 ♖xd1 ♕xd1 31 ♕g2 is equal) 29 ♔e2 (not 29 ♔e3? ♕xc5+ 30 ♘d4 ♕e5+ 31 ♔d2 ♖g4! and Black wins) 29...♕xc2+ 30 ♔f3 ♕f5+ 31 ♔e2.

23...♘xf3+ *(D)*

24 ♔f1??



Now Black succeeds in everything. Both players missed that after 24 ♕xf3 ♕xh2+ 25 ♔f1 ♖f4 26 ♕xf4 ♕xf4+ 27 ♗f2 Black cannot take the knight with 27...♕c4+ 28 ♔g1 ♕xc2? because of 29 ♖ac1, so he should continue 27...♖g5, with the idea of 28 ♘e3 ♖h5, but it is he who has to fight for a draw.

24...♘xh2+ 25 ♔e1

25 ♔g1 would have been even worse in view of 25...♖f4 26 ♖d8+ ♔xd8 27 ♗b6 ♖xg2+ 28 ♕xg2 ♕xb6+.

25...♖f4 26 ♗d6?!

White was obliged to go for 26 ♖d8+ ♔xd8 27 ♗b6 ♖xf2 28 ♗xc7+ ♔xc7 29 ♔xf2, although the ending after 29...♘g4+ is, of course, also lost.

26...♖xf2 27 ♗xc7 ♖gxg2! 28 ♗xh2

28 ♖d8+ ♔e7 29 ♗xh2 ♔xd8 would have made no difference

28...♖xc2 0-1

White resigned as he loses the house.

Game 67

Shirov – Ivanchuk

Tallinn (rapidplay) 1996

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

It's curious that I have had several interesting rapidplay and even blindfold games against Vasily recently. The time control of this one was 25 minutes each.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♘c3 ♕c7 6 ♗e2

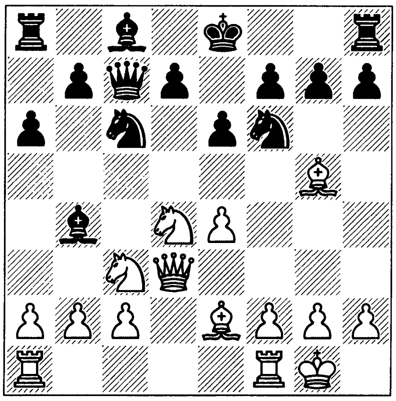
For me this was an improvisation typical of such an unimportant event (I don't know about my opponent, but I played that Tallinn tournament just for fun).

6...♘f6 7 0-0 ♗b4

Here I already found myself in unknown territory. How should I defend e4?

8 ♕d3!? ♘c6 9 ♗g5!?

Later I learned that this was a novelty, but during the game I was just trying to put my pieces onto decent squares.



9...h6

9...♘e5 10 ♕e3 is unclear.

10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 ♖ad1 h5 12 ♔h1 ♘xd4 13 ♕xd4 ♗e7 14 f4

The alternative 14 ♕d2!? b5 15 ♗d3, with unclear chances, would have been more suitable for slow chess.

14...b5

Here I saw a fascinating sacrifice, and after about five minutes' thought I decided that it was worth a try. The funny thing (but not for me) was that a few months later I had an opportunity to play exactly the same idea in a different position against Kramnik (Monaco rapidplay 1996), but scoring just half a point from two such promising games is very annoying.

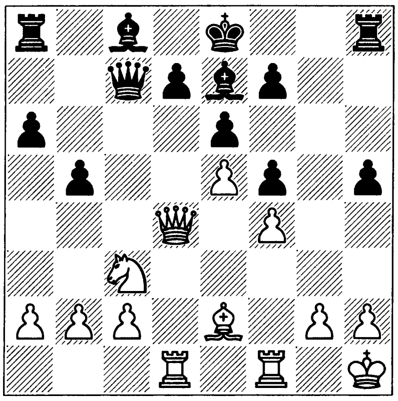
15 e5 f5 *(D)*

16 ♘d5!!

16 ♗f3 ♗b7 17 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 18 ♖d2 or 18 ♘e2 would have led to an unclear game. Not very exciting.

16...exd5 17 e6 0-0!

W



The best defence. 17...♖f8 18 exf7+ ♔d8 19 ♕xd5 ♗b7 20 ♕xf5 is extremely dangerous for Black.

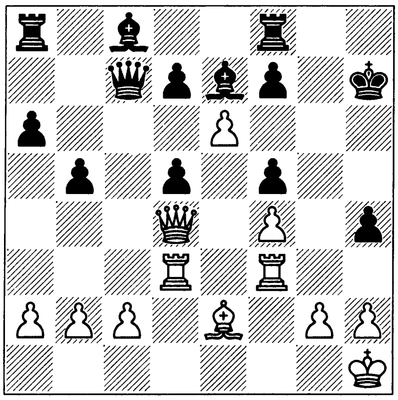
18 ♖d3?

The safest (because it keeps a perpetual in reserve) but not the best way. By playing 18 exf7+ ♖xf7 19 ♗xh5 I could have obtained the advantage, for example 19...♕c4 (or 19...♗b7 20 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 21 ♕d3) 20 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 21 ♕h8! with a very strong initiative.

18...h4 19 ♖ff3 ♔h7!

The only move but one that saves Black.

W



20 ♖g3

20 ♕xd5 fxe6 21 ♕xa8 ♗b7 22 ♕a7 ♖a8 (22...♗c5? 23 ♖c3) 23 ♕f2 ♗xf3 24 ♗xf3 ♖d8 would have led to equality.

20...hxg3 21 ♖xg3 f6 22 ♖h3+

I was looking at this position for all my remaining time, unable to believe that White has nothing more than perpetual check, but my hanging flag warned me that I should at least not 'forget' to split the point.

Trying for more would have been severely punished, for example 22 ♕xd5? ♕xf4; 22 ♕f2? ♖g8! 23 ♖h3+ ♔g7 24 ♖g3+ (24 ♕h4 ♔f8 25 ♕h6+ ♔e8 26 ♖g3 ♖f8) 24...♔f8 25 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 26 ♕g3+ ♔f8 27 ♕g6 dxe6 28 ♗h5 ♗d6 29 ♕e8+ ♔g7 30 ♕g6+ ♔h8 31 ♕e8+ ♗f8 32 ♕xf8+ ♔h7; and 22 exd7? ♕xd7. Black wins in each variation.

22...♔g7 23 ♖g3+ ½-½

Game 68

Shirov – Adams

Wijk aan Zee 1996

The game was annotated in February 1996 and published in various magazines.

This game proved to be another successful use of 3 e5 against the Caro-Kann. Unfortunately when I do it against Karpov or Anand things are different...

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♗f5 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗e2 ♘d7 6 0-0 ♘e7 7 ♘h4 ♗e4!?

A surprising novelty. I was familiar with 7...c5, 7...♕b6 and 7...♗g6.

8 ♘d2

8 ♗e3 ♘f5 9 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 would have transposed to the second round game Shirov-Anand, in which I got absolutely nothing from the opening.

8...♘f5 9 ♘hf3

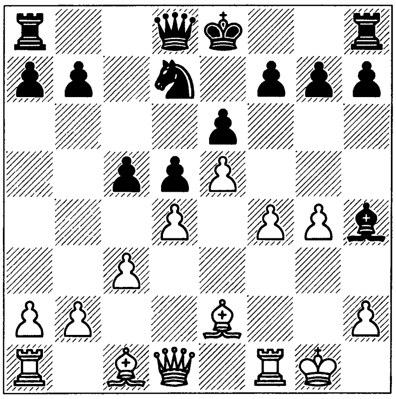
9 ♘xe4? ♕xh4 was not advisable. With the knight retreat White seems to have lost two tempi compared to some lines. In a way that's true, but the black bishop is a little bit misplaced on e4 and this makes his counterplay in the centre more difficult. Therefore after a few more moves Adams allows a structure which I very much like for White.

9...c5 10 c3 ♗e7?!

I would recommend either 10...cxd4 or 10...♕b6!?

11 g4 ♗xf3 12 ♘xf3 ♘h4 13 ♘xh4 ♗xh4 14 f4

White's position is very pleasant and easy to play. Black has to come up with a defensive plan.



14...cxd4 15 cxd4 ♗e7 16 ♗e3 ♕b6 17 ♗d3 0-0 18 ♕e2

If Black now allows 19 f5 his position will become terrible. So the next move is practically forced.

18...f6 19 ♔g2?!

This plays into Black's hands. The idea of making a waiting move and trying to further improve White's position is the correct one, but the king goes to the wrong square. 19 ♔h1! was to be preferred, as then any attempt by Black to free his position would rebound, for example:

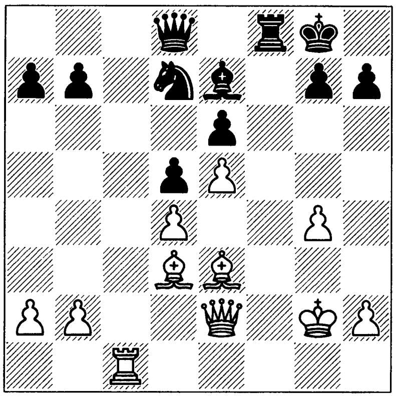
a) 19...fxe5 20 fxe5 ♖xf1+ 21 ♖xf1 ♖f8 22 ♖c1 intending 22...♕d8 23 g5! ♗xg5? 24 ♕h5 h6 (or 24...♗h6 25 ♖g1 ♔h8 26 ♗xh6 gxh6 27 ♗xh7) 25 ♕g6 ♕b6 (25...♖f7 26 ♕h7+ ♔f8 27 ♖c8 ♕xc8 28 ♕h8+ ♔e7 29 ♗xg5+ hxg5 30 ♕xc8 and 25...♗xe3 26 ♕h7+ ♔f7 27 ♗g6+ both win for White) 26 ♗xg5 hxg5 27 ♕h7+ ♔f7 28 ♕h5+ ♔e7 29 ♕xg5+ and White is winning; or

b) 19...♖ac8?! 20 f5! fxe5 21 fxe6 ♕xe6 22 ♗f5 and White has a clear plus. Instead, Black should also bide his time by

c) 19...♖f7!, after which White might continue 20 ♖g1!?, intending 21 ♖g3 with an attack.

19...fxe5 20 fxe5 ♖xf1 21 ♖xf1 ♖f8 22 ♖c1 ♕d8

Here I probed deeply into the position and discovered that my advantage had almost dissipated. Badly wanting to score my first win in the tournament, I decided to go for complications and fortunately this time my decision was reasonable.



23 ♕c2!?

When I was making my 19th move I missed that in the variation 23 g5!? ♗xg5 24 ♕h5, Black would have 24...♗h6! (not 24...h6 25 ♕g6) 25 ♗xh6 gxh6 26 ♕xh6 ♖f7! (but not 26...♕e7? 27 ♖c7) 27 ♔h1 (27 ♕xe6?? ♕g5+ wins for Black) 27...♘f8 28 ♖g1+ ♔h8, when the position is equal.

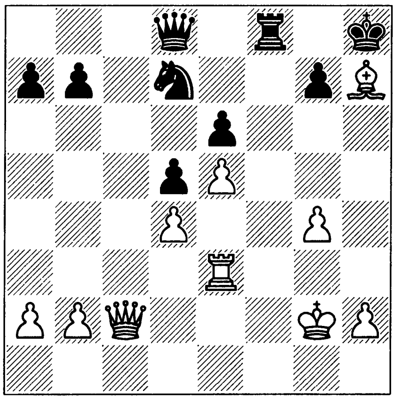
23...♗g5!

23...h6 would have yielded White a slight edge in the endgame arising after 24 ♕c7 ♗g5 25 ♕xd8 ♗xd8. The pawn sacrifice is better.

24 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 25 ♖e1 ♗xe3

25...♗f4? 26 ♗f2 ♕g5 27 h3 is better for White.

26 ♖xe3



26...♖f4?

Tempting but not best. Instead 26...♕g5 27 ♖g3 ♕f4 28 ♗d3 ♔g8 (28...♕xd4? 29 ♖h3+ ♔g8 30 ♗h7+ ♔f7 31 ♕g6+ ♔e7 32 ♕g5+ wins for White) 29 ♗h7+ (29 ♕c3?! ♘b8! is slightly better for Black) 29...♔h8 would have forced me to repeat moves.

27 ♖g3 ♖xd4?

This loses. Black had some other possibilities but it seems to me that White should always stand better. Here are the variations:

a) 27...♕h4 28 ♗d3 ♔g8 (or 28...♘f8 29 h3) 29 ♕c7 ♘f8 30 h3 with a clear plus (30...♖xd4? is met by 31 ♖f3);

b) 27...g5 28 ♕g6 ♖xd4 with three variations:

b1) 29 ♕h5 ♔g7! is unclear;

b2) 29 ♗g8 ♖d2+ 30 ♔h1 (30 ♔f1 ♖xh2 is also unclear) 30...♖d1+ 31 ♔g2 ♖d2+ with equal chances;

b3) 29 ♕xe6! ♖d2+ 30 ♔f1! (not 30 ♔h3 ♔xh7 31 ♖f3 ♕h8!! 32 ♕f7+ ♕g7 33 e6 ♘e5 34 ♕h5+ ♔g8 with a draw) 30...♖xh2 31 ♗f5 and White is on top;

c) 27...♘f8 28 ♕d2 g5 29 ♗b1 ♕b6 30 ♖f3! ♖xg4+ 31 ♔h3 ♖h4+ 32 ♔g3 with a clear advantage for White.

28 ♕f2!

After the game Michael admitted that he had overlooked this. His position is now lost.

28...♖b4?!

28...♔xh7 29 ♕xd4 would have offered slightly more resistance, although White is still winning.

29 ♗g6 ♕h4

Or 29...♕e7 30 ♖h3+ ♔g8 31 ♗f7+ ♕xf7 32 ♖h8+ ♔xh8 33 ♕xf7 ♖xb2+ (or 33...♖xg4+ 34 ♔h3) 34 ♔g3 and White wins.

30 ♕f7 ♖xb2+ 31 ♔f1 ♘f6 32 ♕f8+?!

It was a lot simpler to play 32 exf6 ♕xf6+ 33 ♖f3, but in time-pressure I found the other winning idea first.

32...♘g8 33 ♖c3

Now 34 ♕xg8+ ♔xg8 35 ♖c8+ is threatened and Black has no useful checks!

33...♖b1+ 34 ♗xb1 ♕xg4 35 ♕f3 1-0

Game 69

Shirov – Gelfand

Wijk aan Zee 1996

The game was annotated in February and published in various magazines.

Before this game I had just 3 out of 8; and besides I had developed a severe cold, which is clearly not the best companion if you're playing in Wijk aan Zee, with its strong winds and poor heating in the playing area where doors sometimes open by themselves. I was just dreaming of survival and getting back to Spain, but somehow in this condition I managed to score a hat-trick.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e3 e6 7 g4

This move has become rather popular recently, especially since a nice victory by Topalov against Kasparov at the Moscow Olympiad in 1994.

7...e5

This leads by force to very sharp and concrete play. The fact that Kasparov played 7...h6 in the aforementioned game may indicate that the variation with 7...e5 is quite risky for Black.

8 ♘f5 g6 9 g5 gxf5 10 exf5 d5 11 gxf6

11 ♕f3 used to be more popular but I think it's weaker.

11...d4 12 ♗c4! ♕xf6

Another critical continuation is 12...♕c7, after which White normally continues 13 ♕d3 with good attacking chances.

13 ♘d5 ♕c6 14 ♗xd4 ♗b4+

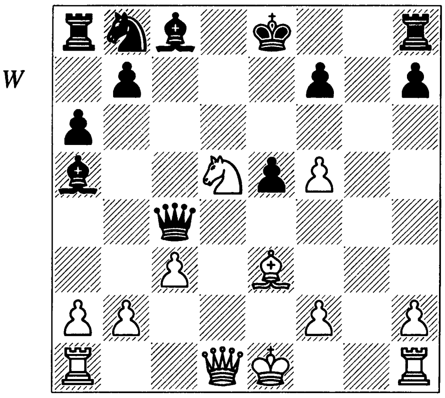
This check is well known to be the only move. 14...♕xc4? 15 ♘f6+ ♔e7 16 ♗xe5 and 14...exd4? 15 ♕xd4 are definitely inadvisable for Black.

15 c3 ♕xc4 16 ♗e3 ♗a5 *(D)*

A novelty which sent me into long thought. 16...♗e7 17 ♘b6 ♕c6 18 ♖g1 was played in the game Th. Thorhallsson-J.L. Arnason, Reykjavik 1992, which appears to favour White.

17 ♘f6+ ♔e7 18 ♘d5+

I already felt that it wouldn't be easy to calculate everything with the modern



time control, so here and also later in the game I repeated moves even though I had a little more time than my opponent. This was a practical enough decision but at the end of the game I still managed to go wrong.

18...♔e8 19 ♘f6+ ♔e7 20 ♗g5!

Of course, it's too early to draw with 20 ♘d5+.

20...♗c7?

This came as a surprise and with my bad form I didn't react to it properly. I had expected 20...♖d8, which I think is better, for example 21 ♘xh7+ and now not

a) 21...♔e8 22 ♘f6+ ♔e7 23 ♘e4+ ♔f8 (23...♔e8? 24 ♕xd8+ ♗xd8 25 ♘d6+) 24 ♕g4 ♖d4 25 f3! and White's attack is terrifying; but

b) 21...f6! 22 ♗xf6+ ♔e8 23 ♕h5+ ♕f7 24 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 25 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 and the two bishops are no weaker than the white rook and pawns, as I had already learned from Boris in Dos Hermanas the previous year.

21 ♘e4+?

21 ♕d5! would have given White a huge advantage, as shown by the following lines: 21...♕xd5 22 ♘xd5+ ♔d6 (22...♔d7 23 0-0-0 f6 24 ♗e3!) 23 0-0-0 and now

a) 23...♔c6 24 ♘e7+ ♔b6 25 ♗e3+ ♔a5 26 ♖d5+ b5 27 a4!! ♘c6 (27...♗b7 28 b4+ ♔xa4 29 ♔b2 or 27...♔xa4 28 ♔c2) 28 b4+ ♘xb4 29 cxb4+ ♔xb4 30 ♔b2 ♗b7 31 ♗d2+ ♔xa4 32 ♖a1 mate;

b) 23...♗xf5 24 ♘b6+ ♔c6 25 ♘xa8 ♗d6 26 ♘b6 ♗e6 27 c4 and although Black has some compensation for the exchange it shouldn't be enough for a draw if White plays well.

21...♔e8?

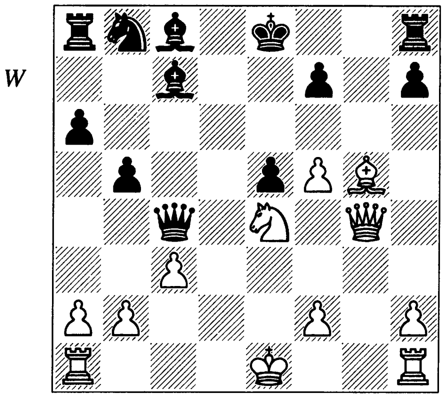
It's easy to err in such a tactical position. Stronger was 21...♔f8! and after 22 ♗h6+ not

a) 22...♔e7 23 ♕g4 (23 f6+? ♔e8 24 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 25 ♕xd6 ♕e4+ is better for Black) 23...♘d7 24 0-0-0! with a clear plus for White; but

b) 22...♔e8! 23 ♕g4!? (23 ♘f6+ ♔e7 24 ♘d5+ ♔e8 is a draw) 23...♕c6 24 ♗g7 ♖g8 25 0-0-0 ♘d7 26 f3!? and White still has a strong attack but is already taking risks.

22 ♕g4 b5

Otherwise Black would lose by force, for instance 22...♕c6 23 ♘f6+ ♔f8 24 0-0-0 h5 (24...♘d7 25 ♗h6+ ♔e7 26 ♘d5+ ♔e8 27 ♕g7) 25 ♗h6+ ♔e7 26 ♕g7 ♕xf6 27 ♗g5 ♕xg5+ 28 ♕xg5+ ♔e8 29 f4! and the game is over.



23 ♘f6+?

I saw that with this move I would get a clear advantage and went for it, not having seen the forced win with 23 0-0-0 ♘d7 24 ♗h6! ♕xa2 25 ♕g7 ♕a1+ 26 ♔d2 ♕xb2+ 27 ♔e1 ♖f8 28 ♘f6+ ♔e7 29 ♗g5 ♕xc3+ 30 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 31 ♔g1. The white king's journey in this variation is amusing.

23...♔e7

This time Gelfand puts his king onto the right square. After 23...♔f8 it would also have made a long trip, but only to its grave, i.e. 24 ♗h6+ ♔e7 25 ♕g5! ♘d7 (25...♗b7 26 ♖d1!) 26 ♘xd7+ ♔xd7 27 0-0-0+ ♔c6 (27...♗d6 28 ♕f6) 28 ♕g2+ e4 (or 28...♔b6 29 ♕xa8 ♕xa2 30 ♗e3+ ♔a5 31 ♕e4) 29 ♖d4 ♕xa2 30 ♕xe4+ ♔b6 31 ♗e3 ♔a5 (31...♔a7 32 ♖d8+ wins) 32 ♖a4+!! ♕xa4 (32...bxa4 33 ♕b4 mate) 33 b4+ ♕xb4 34 ♕xb4 mate.

24 0-0-0!

24 ♕xc4?! bxc4 25 0-0-0 ♗b7 is unclear.

24...♕xg4

Forced.

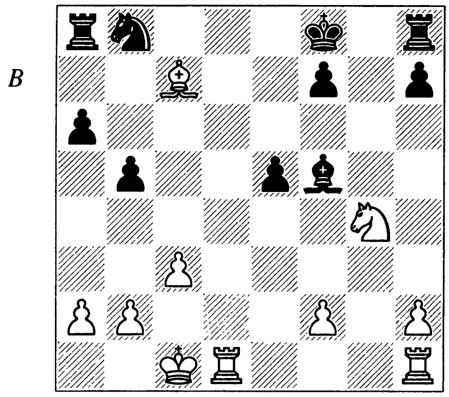
25 ♘xg4+ ♔f8

25...♔e8? 26 ♘f6+ ♔f8 27 ♗h6+ ♔e7 28 ♘d5+ wins for White.

26 ♗h6+

See the note to move 18.

26...♔e7 27 ♗g5+ ♔f8 28 ♗d8! ♗xf5 29 ♗xc7



With the queens off it's surely easier for Black to defend, but now Gelfand makes a mistake which is hard to spot.

29...♘c6?!

Of course, 29...♗xg4 would have failed to 30 ♖d8+ ♔g7 31 ♗xe5+ f6 32 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 33 ♖xh8, and if 33...♗f3 34 ♖f8+, but 29...♘d7!, seemingly the same as the text, would in fact have been much better. Black loses a pawn, but retains considerable drawing chances, for example:

a) 30 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 31 ♗xe5 (31 ♗d6+ ♔g7 32 ♗xe5+ f6) 31...♖g8;

b) 30 ♗d6+ ♔g7 31 ♗xe5+ ♘xe5 32 ♘xe5 ♖he8;

c) 30 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 31 ♘xe5 ♖g8. The best White can get in any of these variations is a slight advantage.

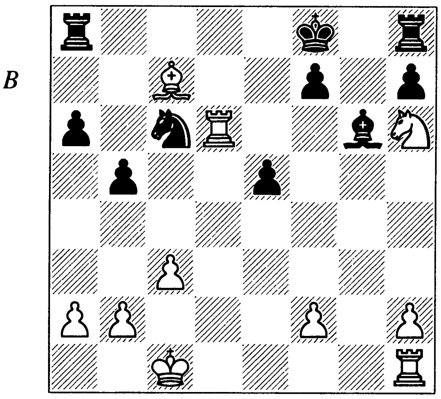
30 ♘h6!

I am very proud of this move, refusing a pawn and still playing for the attack, despite time-pressure. 30 ♘xe5 and 30 ♗xe5 simply transpose to 29...♘d7.

30...♗g6

30...♗e6 31 ♖hg1!, threatening 32 ♖d6, would have been highly unpleasant for Black.

31 ♖d6



31...♘b4!!

An amazing pre-time-scramble defence. I would have liked 31...♘e7 32 ♖d7 much more.

32 cxb4 ♔g7 33 h4!

White has to be very precise now. A draw would have been the result of 33 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 34 ♖hd1 ♖hc8 35 ♖d7+ ♔e8 or 33 ♘g4 ♖hc8 34 ♖c6 ♗e4 35 ♗xe5+ ♔f8 (35...f6!? is also interesting) 36 ♗d6+ ♔g7 37 ♗e5+ ♔f8.

33...♖hc8

After making this move Gelfand had almost no time left.

34 h5!

34 ♖c6 f6! equalizes.

34...♖xc7+ 35 ♔d2 ♗e4 36 ♖g1+ ♔h8

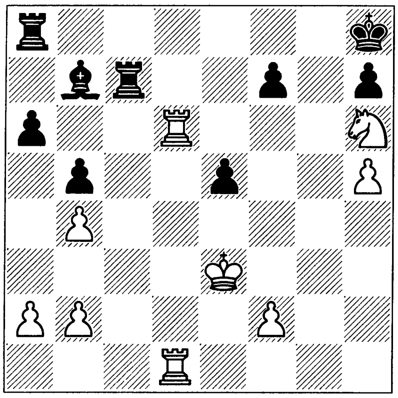
The king goes into the corner, but after 36...♔f8 37 ♖g8+ ♔e7 38 ♖xa8 ♔xd6 (or 38...♗xa8?! 39 ♘f5+) 39 ♖xa6+ White's task would have been even more straightforward.

37 ♔e3 ♗b7

Here I spent a couple of minutes trying to complete the mating net, but I couldn't finding anything special and had to play some quick moves so as not to lose on time.

38 ♖gd1!

38 ♖f6 ♖f8 39 ♖g5 ♖e7 is only slightly better for White.



38...♖e8?!

A time-trouble mistake. 38...♖f8 would have been tougher, but White is still better after 39 ♘f5 with the idea of 39...♖c4 40 f3 ♖f4? 41 ♖d8 ♖xf3+ 42 ♔e2 ♖xf5 43 h6!! mating.

39 ♘f5?

A reciprocal time-trouble error, missing that 39 ♖d7 ♖xd7 40 ♖xd7 finishes the game at once.

39...♗c8??

Down to his very last seconds, Gelfand doesn't find 39...♖c4! which in fact would have been a good practical try. Now the correct variation is 40 f3 ♖f4 41 ♖d8 ♖xf3+ 42 ♔e2 ♖xf5 43 ♖xe8+ (43 h6 ♗c6! 44 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 45 ♖d8 ♖g5 46 ♖xe8+ ♖g8 47 ♖xe5 ♖g6 48 ♖e8+ ♖g8 is equal) 43...♔g7 44 ♖g1+ ♔h6 45 ♖f1!, when I believe that White should still win in the end.

40 ♖d8

Now the game terminates straight away.

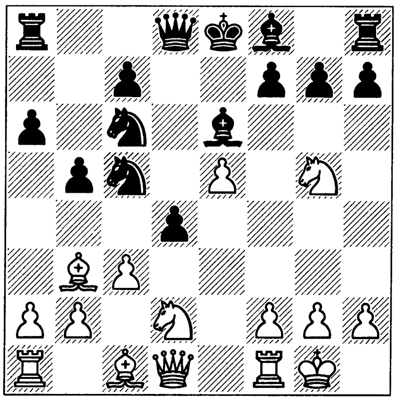
40...♗xf5 41 ♖xe8+ ♔g7 42 ♖xe5 1-0

Game 70
Shirov – Timman
Wijk aan Zee 1996

The game was annotated in February 1996 and published in various magazines.

I included this game in the book as an example of fighting for the win in an objectively drawn ending. Finally I succeeded, got what was already enough to win and... the end of the game is a good example of how careful one should be in the final stages. One hidden thing is missed and half a point is gone, unless your opponent gives it back to you the way Timman did – by resigning!

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 ♘bd2 ♘c5 10 c3 d4 11 ♘g5



Since Kasparov revived this old system, it has become worth analysing. It's so concrete that in some lines one needs to dig deep into the endgame to draw the right conclusions.

11...♕xg5

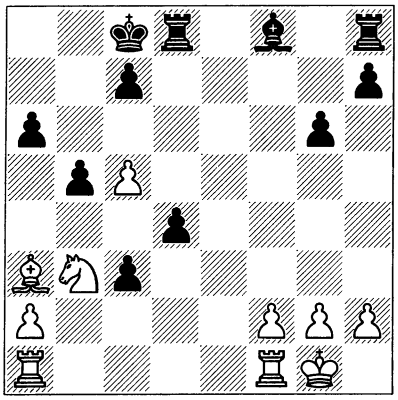
The direct response.

12 ♕f3 0-0-0 13 ♗xe6+ fxe6 14 ♕xc6 ♕xe5 15 b4

15 ♘f3 probably just leads to a draw.

15...♕d5 16 ♕xd5 exd5 17 bxc5 dxc3 18 ♘b3 d4 19 ♗a3 g6!

A new move and one which makes me wonder how long Timman had kept it in mind. He played this line with the white pieces against Smyslov in 1979 and had very good winning chances there, but Smyslov continued 19...♗e7 which is probably weaker.


W

20 ♗b4 ♗g7 21 a4

21 ♖ad1 would have been very risky in view of 21...d3 22 ♘c1 d2 23 ♘e2 ♖d3 24 ♘f4 ♖hd8 25 ♘xd3 ♖xd3 26 c6 g5!, when although Black is a rook down his chances are not at all worse.

21...♔d7 22 axb5 axb5

Here one can see the difference between 19...♗e7 and 19...g6. In the case of 19...♗e7 (and then 20 ♗b4 ♗f6 21 a4 ♔d7 22 axb5 axb5) White would now have 23 ♖a6, with the idea of 23...♖a8 24 ♖xf6 gxf6 25 ♘xd4.

23 ♖ad1

Here 23 ♖a6 would simply be met by 23...♖a8.

23...♔e6 24 ♖fe1+

I was trying to figure out what would happen after 24 ♖d3 and I concluded that in the line 24...♔d5 25 ♗xc3 (25 ♘a5? ♖a8 26 ♖fd1 ♖xa5 27 ♗xa5 ♔c4 wins for Black) 25...♔c4 26 ♖fd1 dxc3 27 ♘a5+ ♔xc5 28 ♘b7+ ♔c4 29 ♘a5+ (29 ♘xd8?? c2) 29...♔b4 30 ♘c6+ ♔c4, a draw is the most that White can get.

24...♔d5 25 ♗xc3

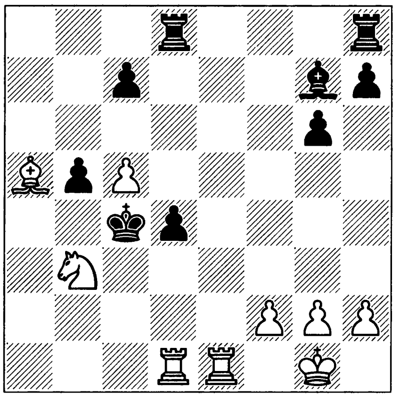
I rejected 25 ♘a5 in view of 25...c2 26 ♖d2 c1♕ 27 ♖xc1 ♗h6, which is unclear.

25...♔c4 26 ♗a5!

The only practical try to win the game. 26 ♘a5+ ♔xc3 27 ♖c1+ is tempting but allows Black an easy draw after 27...♔b2! (but not of course 27...♔d2?? 28 ♔f1 ♔d3 29 ♘c6 or 27...♔d3?? 28 ♘c6 ♖de8 29 ♘b4+ ♔d2 30 ♖ed1+ ♔e2 31 ♖d3 ♗h6 32 ♖c2+ ♔e1 33 ♖b3) 28 ♖b1+ and now either

a) 28...♔a2 29 ♖a1+ (29 ♘c6?! d3! 30 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 31 ♖xb5 d2 32 ♖d1 ♗c3! gives Black plenty of compensation) 29...♔b2; or

b) 28...♔c3 29 ♖bc1+ ♔b2 forces White to give perpetual check.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26...♔xb3 27 ♖b1+ ♔c4 28 ♖ec1+ ♔d5 29 c6!

The point of White's idea. He is now a pawn down but his threats are not to be underestimated. Black has to be precise.

29...♔d6!

29...♗e5? would have lost by force to 30 ♖xb5+ ♔e6 31 ♖xe5+ ♔xe5 32 ♗xc7+ ♔d5 33 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 34 c7 ♖c8 35 ♔f1 ♔d6 36 ♔e2.

30 ♖xb5 ♖b8! 31 ♗b4+

31 ♖b7?! is met by 31...♖xb7 32 cxb7 c5.

31...♔e6 32 ♖e1+ ♔f6! *(D)*

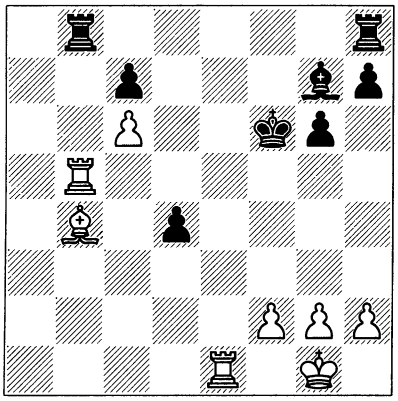
32...♔f7? was wrong, not because of

a) 33 ♖e7+ ♔f6 34 ♖be5 ♗f8! (note that 34...♖xb4?? allows a simple mate after 35 g4 ♗h6 36 h4) 35 ♖5e6+ ♔f5 36 ♖e5+ ♔f6 and the game is drawn; but

b) 33 ♖b7! ♖xb7 34 cxb7 winning.

33 ♗e7+

My original idea was to win the exchange with 33 ♖b7 ♖xb7 34 cxb7 ♖b8 35 ♖b1 ♖xb7 36 ♗e7+ ♔xe7 37 ♖xb7, but



then I realized that after 37...♔d6 Black's compensation is at least sufficient.

33...♔f7 34 ♖d5 ♖hc8?!

Black was only a small step from the draw that would have been reached after 34...♖he8! 35 ♖d7 ♔g8 36 ♔f1 d3 37 ♖xd3 ♖b6.

35 ♖d7 ♔g8 36 g3!

Looking for more practical chances.

36...♖b6

36...♖e8 was still good enough.

37 ♖c1 ♖b3 38 ♗c5 d3?

38...♖c3?? 39 ♖xg7+ needs no comment but 38...♗h6 would probably have saved the game. After the text move White is clearly on top.

39 ♖d1 ♖cb8 40 ♔g2!

Black was hoping for 40 ♖1xd3? ♖xd3 41 ♖xd3 ♖b1+ 42 ♔g2 ♖c1 43 ♖d5 ♔f7! 44 ♖d7+ ♔g8 with a draw, but once White avoids this the game is over.

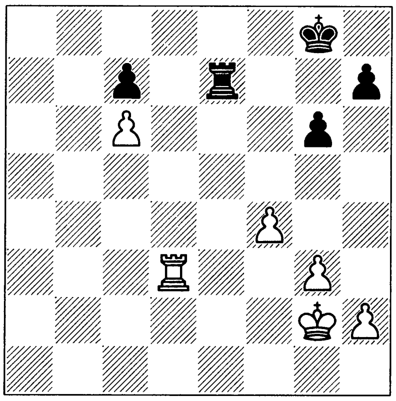
40...♗f8 41 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 42 ♖1xd3 ♖xd3 43 ♖xd3 ♖f7 44 f4 ♖e7 *(D)*

Setting the last but clever trap.

45 g4!

After the natural 45 ♔f3? I would have had to demonstrate my queen endgame abilities in the line 45...♖e6 46 ♖d8+ ♔f7 47 ♖d7+ ♖e7 48 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 49 ♔g4 ♔d6 50 ♔g5 ♔xc6 51 ♔h6 ♔b7 52 ♔xh7 c5 53 ♔xg6 c4 54 f5 c3 55 f6 c2 56 f7 c1♕ 57 f8♕ ♕c2+, which is not the best idea for a sudden death time-control.

[AS – In fact the pawn ending is drawn while the queen's one should be winning after all. But I think that the best is 45 ♔f3 ♖e6 46 ♖c3!, after which just good technique is required to win the game.]



45...♖e6

45...♔f7 46 ♔f3 is also hopeless for Black.

46 ♖d8+ ♔f7 47 ♖d7+ ♖e7 48 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 49 g5! 1-0

Black resigned in view of the obvious 49...♔d6 50 h4 ♔xc6 51 f5 ♔d6 (51...gxf5 52 h5 ♔d6 53 g6 hxg6 54 h6 and wins) 52 f6 and White wins easily. It's strange that I had already won exactly the same pawn ending against Akopian (Oakham 1992) with the only difference that pawns were on the queenside in that game.

[AS – The real difference from that game is in fact that here Black has a pawn on c7. Thus when White's king is on c6 Black puts his to d8 and there is no zugzwang since White's pawn is already on h4 and there is no way to give Black the turn. Therefore Timman simply resigned in a drawn position. This draw was discovered by an amateur from Switzerland.]

Game 71
Nunn – Shirov
Bundesliga 1996

The game was annotated in February 1996 and published in various magazines.

This game was difficult for me. I was not in a perfect state of health and shortly before the game I suffered from a nosebleed. I was quite afraid it would recur during the game but as it went on, I started feeling better and when I sacrificed the rook (♖xc4) it was already clear to me that the blood would be just in the game.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3 c6 4 ♗c4 d6 5 ♕f3 e6 6 ♘ge2 b5 7 ♗b3 a5 8 a3 ♗a6

Despite my terrible loss against Judit Polgar at the Donner Memorial (Amsterdam 1995) I still chose to employ this setup. It's hard to believe that with such a bishop on b3 White should get the advantage.

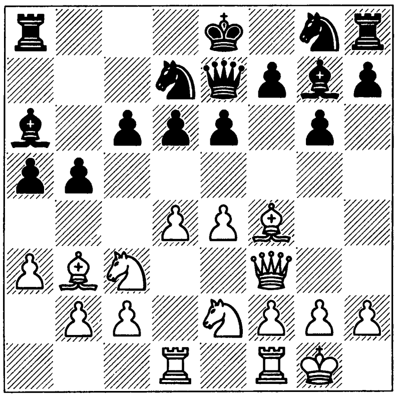
9 0-0

Judit played 9 d5, and after 9...cxd5 10 exd5 e5 11 ♘e4 ♕c7 12 c4 bxc4 13 ♗a4+ ♘d7 14 ♘2c3 ♔e7? 15 ♘xd6! I was crushed with incredible speed. Of course, this time I hoped to improve somewhere but Nunn decided not to test my preparation.

[AS – Later that year Anand played 9 d5 against me in Dos Hermanas and although I lost that game I still have no complaints about the opening phase.]

9...♘d7 10 ♗f4 ♕e7 11 ♖ad1

11 e5!? d5 12 ♕e3 was quite interesting, as this would create some difficulties for Black's development.



11...e5 12 ♗g5

12 dxe5 would have been answered by 12...♘xe5! with an unclear game.

12...♘gf6 13 d5?!

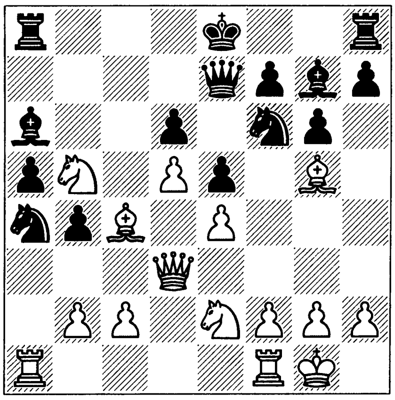
A very dubious plan but I don't know what to recommend for White.

13...c5 14 a4 b4 15 ♘b5 ♘b6!?

As usual I was being quite ambitious. I saw that the simple 15...♗xb5 16 axb5 ♘b6 would be very good but I wasn't sure that I would be able to establish a clear advantage after 17 ♕d3!, with the idea of answering 17...a4 with 18 ♗c4. The text might objectively be even better but it's not as strong as it looks. Now White finds some very good moves (most of which of course I hadn't seen) and the game becomes rather sharp and complicated.

16 ♕d3! c4! 17 ♗xc4 ♘xa4 18 ♖a1!

I had overlooked this. 18 ♖b1 ♘c5 19 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 20 ♕f3 0-0 21 ♖a1 ♖fc8! 22 c3 ♕d8! with a clear advantage would have been more according to my plan.



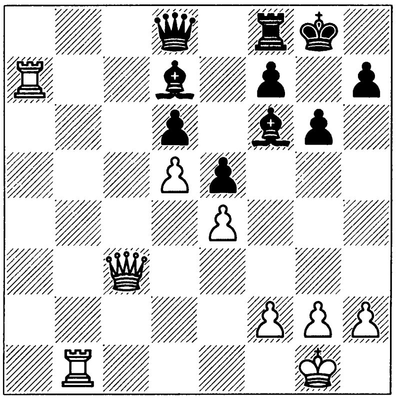
18...♘xb2 19 ♕b3 ♘xc4 20 ♕xc4 ♖c8 21 ♕d3 ♕d8 22 c4! 0-0!?

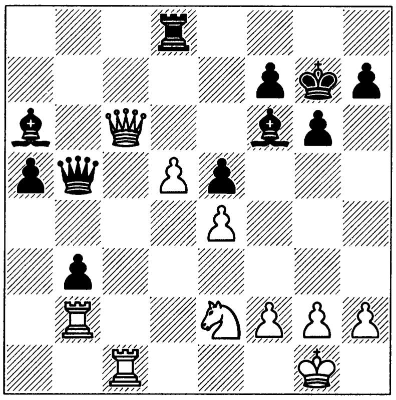
I could not assess the position arising after 22...bxc3 23 ♘exc3 ♖xc3 (23...0-0 24 ♖fb1 provides good compensation) 24 ♕xc3 ♗xb5 25 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 26 ♖fb1 ♗d7 27 ♖xa5 0-0 28 ♖a7! *(D)*

Black has a clear material advantage but his pieces don't seem very comfortable. White's activity yields him very good drawing chances.

23 ♖a2!

Another surprise. Here I realized that if I was to choose now a 'normal' continuation, White would soon get full compensation for the pawn. But then I saw a rook sacrifice. It was difficult to convince myself to do it – just a couple of moves ago I was convinced I had a clear advantage





and now I had to take such risks! After several minutes of uncertainty I decided to take the plunge.

23...♖xc4!!

Variations such as 23...♗xb5 24 cxb5 ♖a8 25 ♖fa1 would just demonstrate White's positional power. But now Black's pawns are going to be really strong.

24 ♗xf6

24 ♕xc4 ♕b6 would ultimately lead to the same thing.

24...♗xf6 25 ♕xc4 ♕b6 26 ♕c7 ♕xb5 27 ♕xd6 ♔g7

The less concrete 27...♗d8!? would probably also have kept Black's advantage. The text leads to positions in which such a small thing as the placing of White's pawn on h2 and not on h3 will sometimes become a decisive factor.

28 ♖c1!

The unprotected first rank leads to White's defeat in the line 28 ♖fa1?! b3! 29 ♖xa5? b2 30 ♕xa6 b1♕+.

28...♖d8! 29 ♕c6

29 ♕c5 b3 30 ♖b2 a4 looks clearly in Black's favour since the queen's exchange, 31 ♕xb5 ♗xb5 32 ♖a1 ♖c8, is catastrophic for White.

29...b3!

Not 29...a4? since in the endgame arising after 30 ♖xa4 ♕xc6 31 dxc6 ♗xe2 32 c7 ♖c8 33 ♖xb4, only White has winning chances.

30 ♖b2 *(D)*

Here I had a feeling of horror, as if I had completely misplayed everything. But it was definitely my day since I quickly found a move that justified all my previous play.

30...♕d3!!

But not 30...a4?, which fails to 31 ♘c3 ♕xc6 32 dxc6 with a clear plus for White. Now White's pieces lack co-ordination, his back rank is vulnerable and 31...♖c8 is threatened.

31 ♖cb1?

Short of time, Nunn loses immediately. He had to try 31 ♖xb3!, when I'm not sure that during the game I would have responded correctly. Home analysis convinced me that 31...♕xe2 would have given White good drawing chances, whereas 31...♕xb3! should maintain Black's edge intact. Here are the variations:

a) 31...♕xe2 32 ♖f3 ♗e7 (32...♗g5? 33 ♕c7 ♖f8 34 ♕xe5+ f6 35 ♖c7+ ♔h8 36 h4 ♕d1+ 37 ♔h2 ♕xf3 38 ♖xh7+ ♔xh7 39 ♕c7+ ♔g8 40 gxf3 is better for White) 33 ♕c7 ♕b2 and now:

a1) 34 h4 and:

a11) 34...♖d7? 35 ♕xd7 ♕xc1+ 36 ♔h2 ♕c5 37 ♕e8 (37 h5!?) gives White compensation;

a12) 34...♖f8 35 ♖cc3 (or 35 ♖c6 ♗d8 36 ♕d6 ♗b7 37 ♖c4 ♗xh4 38 ♖c7 ♗c8) 35...♗xh4 36 ♕xe5+ ♔g8 wins for Black;

a2) 34 h3 ♖d7 35 ♕xd7 ♕xc1+ 36 ♔h2 ♕c5 37 ♕e8 ♗f6 and wins;

a3) 34 ♖d1? ♖e8;

a4) 34 ♖e1! ♖e8 35 ♕xa5 ♗b5 with a slight plus for Black in view of 36 ♕a1 ♕d4!;

b) 31...♕xb3! 32 ♕xa6 a4 (32...♗g5 33 ♕c4! is only slightly better for Black) 33 ♘g3! and now:

b1) 33...a3 34 ♖c7 (34 ♘f1? ♗e7 35 ♖c7 ♗d6 36 ♖b7 ♕c2 37 ♕a7 ♖f8 wins for Black) 34...a2 35 ♖a7 ♕b1+ 36 ♘f1 ♕xe4 37 ♕xa2 ♕xd5 and Black only has a slight plus;

b2) 33...♗e7! 34 ♖c7 (or 34 ♕a7 ♗d6 35 ♕a5 ♖b8, intending 36 ♕a6 ♖b6) 34...♗d6 35 ♖b7 and:

b21) 35...♕c2 36 ♕b6!! ♗c5 37 ♖xf7+! ♔xf7 38 ♕e6+ ♔f8 (38...♔g7 39 ♕xe5+ is equal) 39 ♕f6+ ♔e8 40 ♕e6+ ♗e7 41 ♕g8+ ♔d7 (41...♗f8 42 ♕e6+ is again equal) 42 ♕e6+ ♔c7 43 ♕xe7+ with a draw;

b22) 35...♕d1+! 36 ♘f1 and now:

b221) 36...a3 37 ♕b6! ♖b8 (37...a2? 38 ♕a7! is better for White) 38 ♖xb8 ♗xb8 39 ♕xb8 a2 40 ♕xe5+ ♔h6 41 ♕f4+ with a draw;

b222) 36...♕d4!, with a clear plus. In this position Black should definitely win due to his a-pawn but good technique is still required.

31...♖c8

The rest is easy to understand.

32 ♕a4

Or 32 ♕d6 a4 and wins.

32...♖c2 33 ♖xb3 ♕xe2 34 ♖f3 ♗d3 35 ♕d7 ♗xe4 36 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 37 ♕d6+ ♔f5 38 ♖f1 ♗d3 39 ♕d7+ ♔f6 0-1

If my analysis is correct then this is one of the best games of my career so far. The complications starting with 15...♘b6!? went in the right direction.

Game 72

Korchnoi – Shirov

Madrid 1996

The game was annotated in May 1996 and published in various magazines.

The day before this game I had drawn against Illescas from a much superior position and, with a fifty per cent score, I had now practically lost all chance of a good place. Still, I felt like fighting until the last pawn and, with a certain degree of luck, this worked.

1 c4 e5 2 g3 f5 3 ♗g2 ♘f6 4 d3 ♗b4+ 5 ♘c3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 d6 7 ♘f3 c5

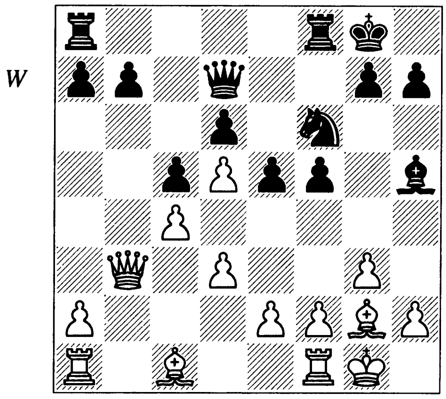
I was not very familiar with the opening and had already begun to improvise.

8 0-0 ♘c6 9 ♘e1 0-0 10 ♘c2 ♗e6 11 ♘e3 ♕d7 12 ♘d5 ♘e7!?

The knight was annoying me.

13 ♕b3!? ♘exd5 14 cxd5 ♗f7 15 c4 ♗h5

Although White has a nice set-up in the centre and good prospects on the queenside, I was still quite optimistic about my attacking chances on the kingside. Easier said than done!



16 f3 ♖ae8?!

Afterwards I felt unhappy about this move. Both 16...h6!? 17 e4 fxe4 18 dxe4 g5 and 16...f4!? deserved serious attention.

17 e4!?

This doesn't look like a bad move, but it provokes the sort of melee I needed. More precise would have been 17 ♗h3! A sample variation is 17...h6 18 e4 ♗g6 19 ♖b1 b6 20 ♕b5!, with a nice game for White. Also interesting was 17 ♖b1!?

17...f4!? 18 gxf4 exf4 19 d4!?

This came as a surprise. In fact, White could have played 19 ♗b2 with the same basic idea but avoiding the complications. Black's answer would then be something like 19...♕c7 20 d4 ♘d7 21 ♗h3 with unclear play. Of course, my calculations were concentrated on the line 19 ♗xf4

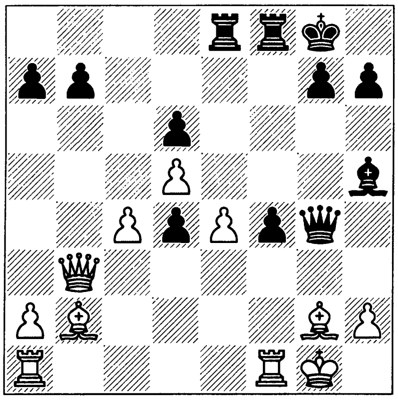
♘xd5! 20 ♗xd6 ♘f4 21 ♗xf8 ♖xf8, when it's not easy to assess the position. My feeling is that Black's initiative compensates for his material losses.

19...cxd4 20 ♗b2 ♘xe4!?

A normal and probably objectively better continuation would have been 20...♕c7 21 ♗xd4 ♘d7 with unclear chances. But I really wanted to win and, having taken Korchnoi's bad form into account, I decided to gamble with a piece sacrifice.

21 fxe4 ♕g4

W



22 h3?

Here White goes astray. The best and in fact only move was 22 ♕h3. Now my original intention

a) 22...♕g6?! would simply fail to 23 ♔h1 ♗e2 (23...f3 24 ♗xf3 ♗xf3+ 25 ♖xf3 ♕xe4 26 ♖af1 seems just losing for Black) 24 ♗xd4 ♗xf1 25 ♖xf1 ♖xe4 26 ♗xa7 and White is better since his bishops are very powerful. Probably the best idea is to go for an ending after

b) 22...f3 23 ♕xg4 ♗xg4 24 h3 ♗h5 25 ♗h1 ♖xe4 26 ♖f2 d3 27 ♖d1 ♖xc4 28 ♖xd3 ♖cf4 with good drawing chances for Black because of the bishop on h1.

22...♕g5!

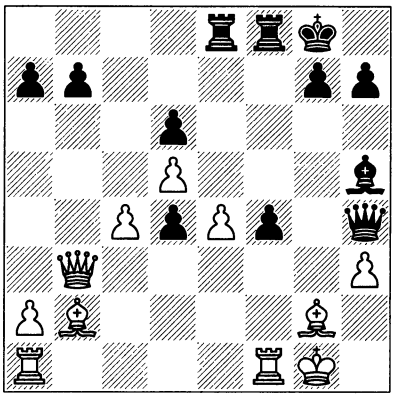
22...♕g6? 23 ♔h2 would have been a great relief for White.

23 ♔h1

23 ♔h2 f3 24 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 25 ♖xf3 ♕d2+ 26 ♔h1 ♖xf3 27 ♕xf3 ♖f8 would also have been in Black's favour, but perhaps this was a better practical chance for White.

23...♕h4! 24 ♔g1

B



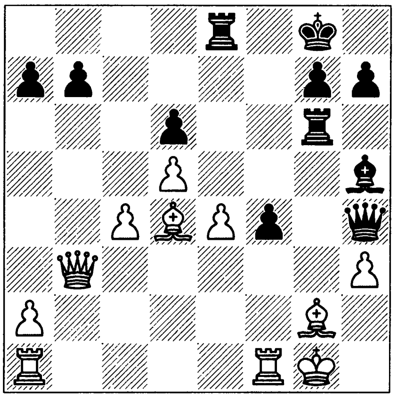
Now 24 ♔h2 seems too late in view of 24...f3 25 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 26 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 27 ♕xf3 ♖f8 28 ♕g4 ♖f2+ 29 ♔g1 ♕xg4+ 30 hxg4 ♖xb2 with a won rook ending.

24...♖f6!!

Of course I didn't even consider repeating moves with 24...♕g5, but it wasn't easy to find a winning idea. For example, 24...♖e5? was not possible because of 25 ♗xd4 ♖g5 26 ♗f2.

25 ♗xd4 ♖g6

W



26 ♔h1?

The decisive mistake. Trying to give up the piece with 26 ♗f2? ♕g5 27 ♗g3 would also lose to 27...f3 but 26 ♕d3 would still have offered some resistance. The best way then for Black is 26...♕g5! (26...♖f8? 27 ♖f3 ♗xf3 28 ♕xf3 ♖g3 29 ♗f2 ♕f6 30 ♕d1 is completely unclear) 27 ♖f2 f3 and the threat of 28...♕g3 makes Black's advantage clear.

26...♖xg2 27 ♔xg2 ♖xe4

Now Black's attack crushes through.

28 ♗g1

After 28 ♗f2 ♖e2 White has no way to parry 29...f3+, winning.

28...♖e2+ 29 ♔h1 ♗g6 30 ♗f2 ♗e4+ 0-1

Game 73

Shirov – Gelfand

Dos Hermanas 1996

The game was annotated in June and published in various magazines.

My only victory in Dos Hermanas was a truly interesting game but one with many mistakes. Still, it gave me some sense of creativity which makes me less pessimistic for future.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2

I had not employed this move before, but I had already had too many 6 ♗e3 games against Boris.

6...e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♔h1 ♕c7!

This very natural plan has occurred surprisingly seldom in tournament practice. Black avoids the line 9...b5 10 a4 but nevertheless wants to place his bishop on b7.

10 f4

The flexibility of Black's 9th move would have been seen after 10 a4 ♗e6, when White has already weakened his queenside.

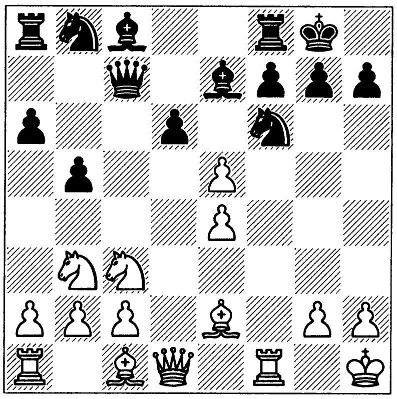
10...b5

This is the point.

11 fxe5

Finding myself in a new situation I went in for an unusual plan. Despite Black's excellent development and control over the centre, White still hopes to attack the enemy king one day. The pawn assault doesn't seem very promising. For example, in the game Zarnicki-Sadler, Buenos Aires 1995, Black had excellent counterplay after 11 ♗f3 ♘bd7 12 a3 ♗b7 13 f5 ♖ac8 14 g4 d5!? 15 exd5 e4!

B



11...dxe5 12 ♗g5!? ♘bd7 13 ♗d3 ♗b7 14 ♕f3 h6 15 ♗d2!

After 15 ♗h4 ♘b6 (intending 16...♘h7) it would have been difficult to generate an attack.

15...♘b6! 16 ♕g3

This natural move in fact proves ineffective. I should have tried 16 ♖ae1!? with a very complicated game.

16...♔h8

Boris is being ambitious. After the game he admitted that he rejected 16...♘h5 in view of 17 ♕g4 (17 ♕h3?! was in fact my intention, but this just yields Black a slightly better position after 17...♘f4 18 ♗xf4 exf4) 17...♘f6 18 ♕g3 (18 ♖xf6? ♗xf6 19 ♗xh6 is completely unsound owing to 19...♗c8 20 ♕g3 ♗e6, when Black is on top) 18...♘h5 and White has nothing better than to repeat the position.

17 ♖f5!

Going for broke!

17...♗c8

This allows White a very dangerous attack by force. I had actually expected 17...b4 18 ♖af1! (18 ♘d5 ♘bxd5 19 exd5 ♗xd5 is no better for White) 18...bxc3 19 ♗xh6 g6 (otherwise Black gets mated, for example 19...gxh6? 20 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♖xf6 ♔h7 22 ♕h4; or 19...♘e8? 20 ♗xg7+ ♘xg7 21 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 22 ♖xf7) and I think that the best way now is 20 ♖xf6! (20 bxc3 ♘bd7 is probably slightly better for Black)

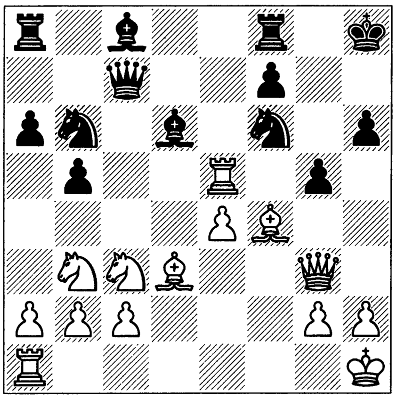
20...♗xf6 21 ♖xf6 cxb2 22 ♖f1 with a very unclear game. Also worth considering is 17...♘c4, but I believe that by playing 18 ♖af1! ♘xd2 (18...♘xb2? 19 ♗xh6 gxh6 20 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♖xf6 is disastrous) 19 ♘xd2 White gets better prospects.

18 ♖xe5!

Of course!

18...♗d6 19 ♗f4 g5

W



Taking the exchange would allow White total domination.

20 ♖c5!

It's funny when the only move in the position is also the most spectacular.

20...gxf4 21 ♕h4 ♗xc5 22 ♕xf6+ ♔g8

So far everything had been forced, but now I had to start thinking. White has several ways of giving perpetual check, but I wanted more.

23 ♘xc5 ♕xc5 24 e5! ♗b7?!

Now Black gets into serious trouble. 24...♘d7! had to be played and after 25 ♕f5 not

a) 25...♖d8 26 ♕h7+ ♔f8 27 ♕xh6+ ♔e8 (27...♔e7 28 ♕h4+ ♔e8 29 ♘e4 ♕xe5 30 ♖e1 also wins for White) 28 ♘e4! and White's attack is decisive; but

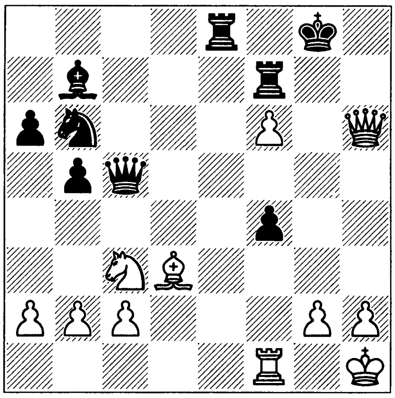
b) 25...♖e8! 26 ♕h7+ ♔f8 27 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 28 ♕g5+ (28 ♗e4 ♘b6! is far from clear) 28...♔f8, when I see nothing better than 29 ♕h6+ with a draw.

25 ♕xh6 f5 26 exf6 ♖f7

The only defence. 26...♕c7 27 ♕g5+! ♔h8 28 ♖e1 was hopeless.

27 ♕g6+ ♔f8 28 ♕h6+ ♔g8 29 ♖f1! ♖e8 30 ♕g6+ ♔f8 31 ♕h6+ ♔g8

W



32 ♗g6?!

I saw the variation 32 ♗h7+ ♖xh7 33 ♕g6+ ♔f8 34 ♕xh7 ♗xg2+ 35 ♔xg2 ♕c6+ 36 ♖f3 ♕xf6, but forgot that then I would have had 37 ♘e4. After 37...♕g7+ 38 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 39 ♖xf4 (to meet 39...♘c4 with 40 ♘c5!) Black's chances of survival are minimal. After the text White is still better but the position gets much more complicated, especially in time-trouble.

32...♕c4 33 ♗xf7+ ♕xf7 34 ♕g5+

34 ♕xf4 would have guaranteed me the advantage, but I was still looking for a forcing way.

34...♔h8 35 ♕h4+ ♕h7 36 f7 ♖f8 37 ♕xf4

37 ♕f6+ ♕g7 is just another repetition of moves.

37...♕g6 38 ♖f2 ♘c8 *(D)*

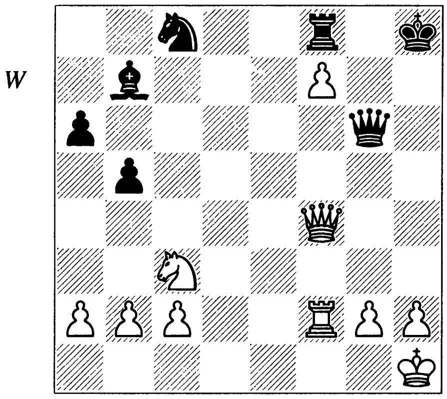
Afterwards Gelfand was unhappy about this move and instead proposed 38...♘c4. White's best answer then is 39 ♘e2!, with a clear plus.

39 h4?

39 ♘e2! would have been especially effective now.

39...♔h7 40 ♔g1?! ♕h6?

As often happens, the final move of the time control is the worst of the game. After 40...♘d6 White would already have to look for a draw. Still, it seems that he can achieve it by continuing 41 ♕e5 ♖xf7 42 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 43 ♖xf7+ ♔g6 44 ♖xb7.



41 ♕e5!

Now White is better again.

41...♕d6

Better was 41...♕g7 42 ♕c7 b4 43 ♕xb7 bxc3 44 bxc3 ♘d6 45 ♕xa6 ♘xf7 46 ♕d3+, though White is still on top.

42 ♕e2! ♔g7

Not 42...b4 43 ♘e4, winning.

43 ♕g4+ ♕g6 44 ♕d4+ ♔h7 45 h5! ♕c6

45...♕xh5? 46 ♖f4 loses immediately, but I had expected 45...♕d6 46 ♕g4! ♕h6 (since 46...♘e7? is bad in view of 47 ♕g5).

46 ♕d3+

46 ♕g4 would still have been answered by the forced 46...♕h6, leading to the same thing.

46...♔h8 47 ♕f5 ♕h6 48 ♕e5+

48 ♘d5! was the right move.

48...♕g7 49 ♕c7?!

White loses his way. Better would have been 49 ♕f4!, with a clear plus.

49...b4 50 ♘e2

50 ♕xb7 bxc3 51 bxc3 ♘d6 allows Black some counterplay.

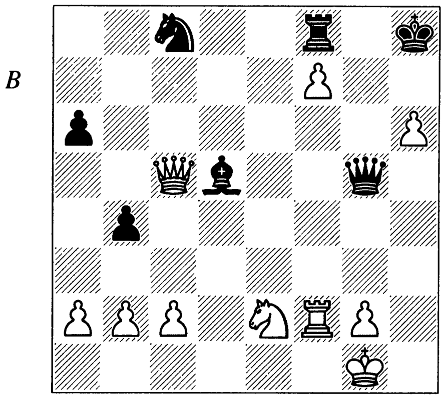
50...♗d5 51 h6

It is not clear whether White has any winning chances in the endgame arising after 51 ♘f4 ♗xf7 52 ♘e6 ♗xe6 53 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 54 h6+ ♔g8 55 h7+ ♔xh7 56 ♖xf8 ♔g7, but perhaps I should have chosen 51 ♕c5!? ♗xf7 52 ♕xb4, retaining an edge.

51...♕g5 52 ♕c5 *(D)*

52 ♕f4?! ♕xf4 53 ♘xf4 ♘e7 54 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 would just have been unclear.

52...♘e7 53 ♘g3?



During the game I thought that this was brilliant but in fact ... By playing 53 c4! bxc3 54 ♘xc3 ♖xf7 55 ♘e4 ♕xh6 56 ♖xf7 ♗xf7 57 ♕xe7 I would still have had good winning chances in the endgame.

53...♕c1+??

Both players missed the simple line 53...♕xg3 54 ♕xe7 ♕xf2+! (first pointed out by Miguel Najdorf) 55 ♔xf2 ♖xf7+ 56 ♕xf7 ♗xf7 with a draw after 57 a3.

54 ♘f1

Now it's all over.

54...♕g5 55 ♘e3

So Black loses his extra piece after all.

55...♔h7 56 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 57 ♕xe7 ♕d1+ 58 ♖f1 ♕d4+ 59 ♔h1 ♔g6 60 ♕e6+ 1-0

Game 74

Shirov – J. Polgar

Dortmund 1996

The annotations on this game were made in July 1996 and have not been published before.

My encounters with Judit have a strange history. Finally I stopped my series of losses against her (it was six in a row!) maybe because this year I played exclusively with the white pieces against her. All the five last games (Dos Hermanas, Dortmund, Vienna, Yerevan and Tilburg) were Sicilians (pity that Lev Polugaevsky has passed away, he would certainly have enjoyed it) and I always achieved a promising position at some stage. Still I managed to beat her only in Tilburg, profiting from old analysis.

This, the Dortmund game, was in my opinion the most interesting from these five.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e3 e6 7 g4 e5!?

It is quite strange that this sharp move has only been played against me in 1996. Six months ago Gelfand played it, but in Dortmund he switched to 7...h6 against Leko in the penultimate round.

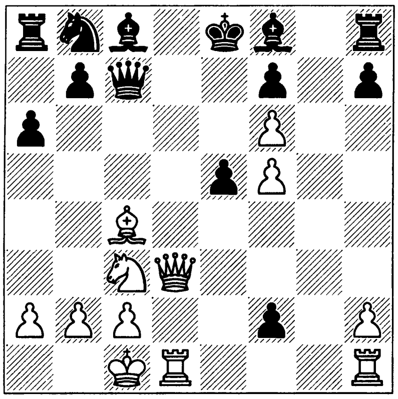
8 ♘f5 g6 9 g5 gxf5 10 exf5 d5 11 gxf6 d4 12 ♗c4 ♕c7

The most popular continuation. Gelfand played 12...♕xf6.

13 ♕d3 dxe3 14 0-0-0 exf2

14...♘c6 15 ♘d5 ♕a5 16 f4 proved to be quite dangerous for Black in Gallagher-Al. Shneider, Bern 1995, and it is no wonder that Judit comes up with a novelty. While thinking about my 15th move I couldn't help feeling that modern chess-playing programs would consider my position to be completely lost since there is no direct mate and the material deficit is already quite large. However, it became clear to me that White's attack is strong despite being rather vague.

W



15 ♗xf7+!

By sacrificing a second piece White can create some threats before Black can develop.

15...♔xf7 16 ♕d5+ ♔e8!

A wise decision. After 16...♔xf6 17 ♘e4+ ♔xf5 18 ♖hf1 ♗h6+ 19 ♔b1 ♗f4 20 ♖xf2 Black's king is soon executed, for example:

a) 20...♖d8 21 ♖xf4+ ♔xf4 22 ♖f1+ ♔e3 (or 22...♔g4 23 ♘f6+ ♔g5 24 ♕f3 and wins) 23 ♘d6 ♕xd6 24 ♖f3+ ♔e2 25 ♕e4+ ♔d1 26 ♖f1+ ♔d2 27 ♕e1 mate; or

b) 20...♕e7 21 ♖xf4+ ♔xf4 22 ♖f1+ ♔g4 23 ♕d1+ ♔h4 24 ♕e1+ ♔h5 25 ♕e2+ ♔g6 26 ♕g2+ ♔h6 (or 26...♔h5 27 ♖f6 ♗g4 28 h3 ♕xf6 29 ♕xg4+ ♔h6 30 ♘xf6 ♖f8 31 h4 ♖xf6 32 ♕g5 mate) 27 ♖f7! and the game is over.

17 f7+ ♔e7 18 ♕f3!

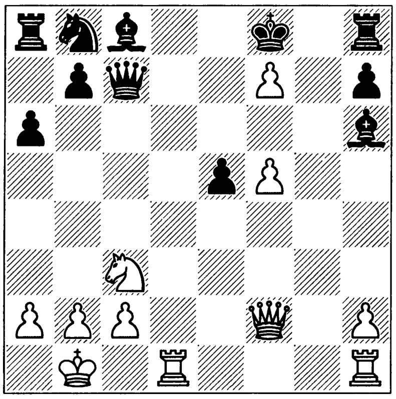
The most ambitious continuation. I saw that 18 f6+ ♔xf6 19 ♕f3+ ♔e6 20 ♕h3+ ♔xf7 21 ♕h5+ ♔g8 22 ♖hg1+ fxg1♕ 23 ♖xg1+ ♕g7 24 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 25 ♕xe5+ ♔g8 26 ♕d5+ ♔g7 27 ♕e5+ would probably have led to a draw by repetition, since 27...♔f7 28 ♕xh8 is quite risky for Black. But of course I wanted more from my position.

18...♗h6+ 19 ♔b1 ♔f8!

Perhaps the only defence. 19...♖d8 20 ♕h5! is extremely unpleasant for Black.

20 ♕xf2

B



20...♘d7?!

But this is certainly too risky. On the other hand, 20...♘c6! would finally have forced me to repeat moves after 21 ♕h4 (I don't like 21 ♘d5 ♕d6 22 ♘b6 ♘d4 23 ♘xa8 ♔xf7 at all for White) 21...♗f4 22 ♕f6 ♕xf7 23 ♕xh8+ ♕g8 24 ♕f6+ ♕f7, since now 25 ♕d6+ ♕e7 is not very promising.

21 ♘e4!?

This move took me a long time to find, and after making it I was already in danger of serious time-trouble. The problem was that I couldn't find a win after 21 ♕h4 ♗g7 22 ♘d5 ♕d6 23 ♖hg1 ♔xf7, but in fact it is reached in one move, i.e. 24 ♘c7!!, when the line 24...♕xc7 (or 24...♕h6 25 ♕c4+) 25 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 26 ♕e7+ ♔h6 27 ♖g1 speaks for itself. However, instead of 23...♔xf7 Black has the much stronger 23...h6! 24 ♕g4 ♖h7, and I don't see how White can get more than a draw after 25 ♘f4 (25 ♕g6 ♕xg6 26 fxg6 ♖h8 27 ♘c7 ♖b8 28 ♘e6+ ♔e7 29 ♘xg7 ♘f6! should be okay for Black) 25...♕f6! 26 ♘e6+ ♔xf7 27 ♕c4 ♘b6 28 ♕c7+ (28 ♘g5+ ♔e8 29 ♕g8+ ♕f8 30 ♕xf8+ ♗xf8 31 ♘xh7 ♗c5 cannot favour White) 28...♘d7 29 ♕c4 ♘b6 30 ♕c7+ with a repetition.

21...♗g7!

After the game Judit demonstrated to me an amazing resource that I had not seen, i.e. 21...a5. But then she indicated that it was probably insufficient in view of 22 ♖hg1 ♖a6 23 f6! and White should win, for instance 23...♕c4 (23...♘xf6 24 ♘xf6; 23...♔xf7 24 ♕h4) 24 ♕h4 ♗f4 25 ♕g4 ♕xf7 26 ♕g7+ ♕xg7 27 fxg7+ ♔g8 28 ♘d6.

22 ♖hg1!

Of course, Black would be happy to sacrifice back one piece to organize a defence after 22 f6? ♘xf6 23 ♘xf6 ♗e6 or 22 ♕h4?! ♘f6 23 ♘xf6 ♗xf5.

22...♘f6 23 ♕g3! ♕xf7 24 ♕a3+!

Immediately after the game I was very unhappy about this move but it became clear at the post-mortem that it is entirely correct. The alternative 24 ♖d8+? ♔e7 25 ♘g5 fails to 25...♕c4 26 ♖xh8 ♗xh8 27 ♕xe5+ ♗e6! (easy to overlook from a distance!) 28 ♘xe6 ♘e4 and Black has an edge.

24...♕e7 25 ♕xe7+

The exchange of queens allows White to win back the material and continue playing for a win without any risks. Another possibility was 25 ♖d8+ ♘e8 26 ♘c5!?, but after 26...♔f7!? (26...♗xf5 27 ♖xa8 ♗h6 28 ♖b8 is unclear) 27 ♕b3+ ♔f8 28 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 29 ♘e6+ ♔f7 30 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 31 ♘e6+ ♔f7, he has to go for perpetual check.

25...♔xe7 26 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 27 ♖c7! ♘e8!

Of course, not 27...♗xf5? 28 ♘xf6 and White wins easily.

28 ♖d8 ♖g8!

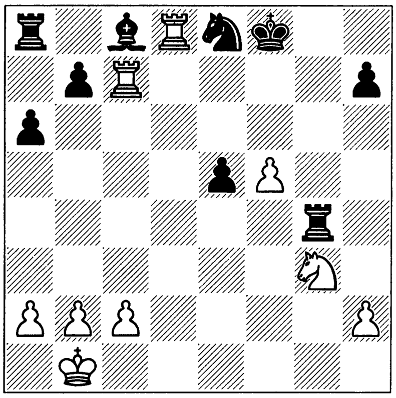
After the game Judit stated that she had missed the line 28...♗xf5 29 ♖xa8 ♗xe4 30 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 31 ♖c8+, when she was considering something her like 22nd move ... However with the text she threatens both 29...♖g1+ and 29...♗xf5.

29 ♘g3

The only way to parry these threats.

29...♖g4

W



30 ♖xh7

Time-trouble was forcing me to play quickly and I started to miss the best opportunities. I believe that by continuing 30 ♔c1 ♖d4 31 ♖dxc8 ♖xc8 32 ♖xc8 ♖h4 33 ♖b8 b5 34 ♖b6 I would have had even better winning chances than in the game.

30...♖d4 31 ♖h8+ ♔f7 32 ♖hxe8

Game over?

32...♗d7!!

Not at all! White has to exchange a pair of rooks, when with a strong bishop Black has very good prospects of holding the position.

33 ♔c1

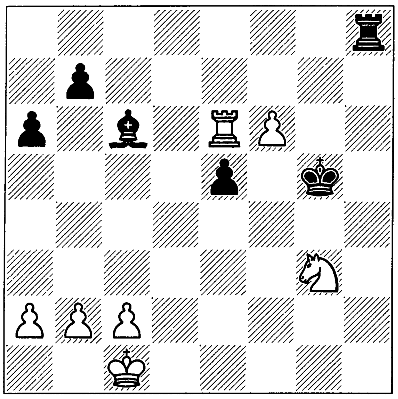
In retrospect I would prefer 33 ♖f8+ ♔e7 34 f6+ ♔e6 35 ♔c1 ♖xd8 36 ♖xd8 ♔xf6 37 c3! ♖d5 38 h4, with a slight plus.

33...♗xe8 34 ♖xa8 ♖h4 35 ♖d8?!

35 ♘f1!, as suggested by Judit, was probably my last real practical chance. But I was already fighting with the clock.

35...♖xh2 36 ♖d5 ♔f6 37 ♖d6+ ♔g5 38 ♖e6 ♖h8 39 f6 ♗c6!

Practically forcing White to give up his passed pawn.



W

40 ♖xe5+ ♔xf6 41 ♖e3 ♖e8! 42 ♔d2 ♖xe3 43 ♔xe3 ♔e5 44 ♘e2 ♔d5 45 ♘d4 ♗e8 46 ♔d3 ♗g6+ 47 ♔c3 ♔c5 48 ♘e6+ ♔d6 49 ♘f4 ♗f5 50 ♘d3 ♔d5 51 ♔b4?!

Black has reached a drawn position but there was still no reason to call it a day immediately.

51...♗xd3! 52 cxd3 ♔d4 53 ♔a5 ♔xd3 54 ♔b6 ♔c2 55 a4

If 55 ♔xb7 then 55...a5! saves Black.

55...♔b3! 56 a5 ♔a4! ½-½

It was still not too late to lose the game with 56...♔b4?? 57 b3. But now the draw really had to be agreed.

Game 75
Kramnik – Shirov
Vienna 1996

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

When I learned that I would play Kramnik with Black, I was not especially confident because the memory of how I lost to him in Dortmund, without getting out of the opening, was still very fresh. Therefore I chose a set-up involving some risk, but in which the chances to safely reach a middlegame fight were still very good.

1 ♘f3 d5 2 d4 c6 3 c4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 a6

In Vienna I returned to the Chebanenko system, which I played a lot during 1993-4, scoring 3 out of 4 – a successful comeback. I also scored a further 3 out of 4 after Vienna, but only with some luck...

5 c5

Kramnik has almost never encountered the 4...a6 system as White and I didn't know what to expect from him. Once he played 5 a4.

5...♗f5!?

I used to play the 'pure Moldavian' 5...g6 , but then Black gets a passive position. The text has been well employed by my countryman Jordi Magem.

6 ♕b3 ♖a7

Against Ivan Sokolov at the Erevan Olympiad, 1996 I switched to 6...♕c8. I am still trying to figure out which of the two moves is better.

7 ♗f4 ♘bd7 8 h3

A new move to avoid 8 e3 ♘h5!? when, by exchanging the strong white bishop, Black should probably solve his opening problems.

8...h6!? 9 e3 g5 10 ♗h2 ♗g7 11 ♘e5!?

Kramnik is being ambitious but it is a bit risky as his development is not very good. I believe that Black should also be OK after 11 ♗e2 ♘e4!?, but 11 ♘d2!? could be an interesting try.

11...0-0 12 f3 *(D)*

12 ♗d3 probably promises White a slight advantage.

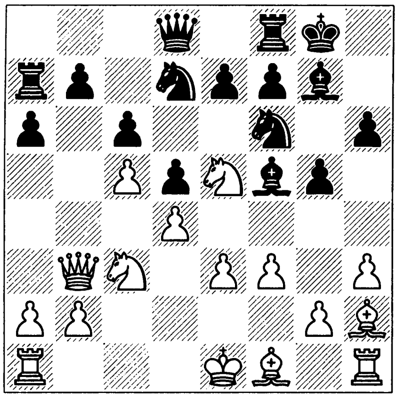
12...♘xe5!

Otherwise Black has a passive position.

13 ♗xe5 ♘d7 14 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 15 e4

This pawn advance is not dangerous but 15 ♗e2 ♕c7 16 ♔f2 e5 would also promise Black a good game.

15...dxe4 16 fxe4 ♗g6 17 0-0-0?



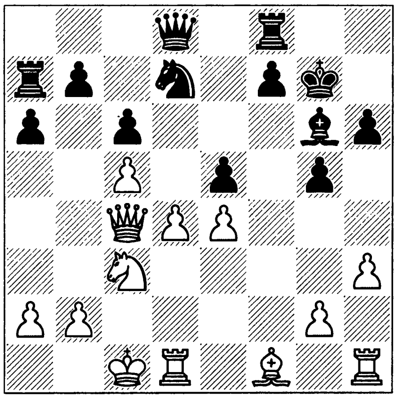
This bad move was accompanied by a draw offer but I rejected it as now Black gets a clear advantage by simple means. White should continue 17 e5 which I was planning to answer by 17...b6 18 cxb6 ♕xb6 (18...♖b7 19 0-0-0 ♖xb6 20 ♕a3 is unclear) 19 ♕xb6 ♘xb6 20 0-0-0 ♘d5!? with a roughly equal endgame.

17...e5!

Now White's centre collapses while the isolated e4-pawn remains as a weakness. White is unable to arrange any counterplay.

18 ♕c4

Both 18 dxe5 ♕e7 and 18 d5 ♘xc5 19 ♕c4 ♘d7 are clearly better for Black.



18...♕f6!

A very precise move. Now White is forced to exchange pawns before completing his development.

19 dxe5

19 d5 ♕f4+ 20 ♖d2 (20 ♔b1 cxd5 is also very bad) 20...♕e3 21 b4 a5 is awful for White.

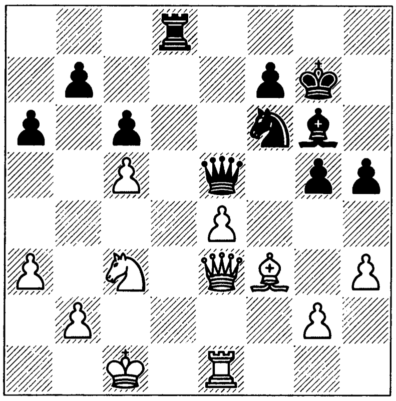
19...♘xe5 20 ♕d4 ♖aa8!

I was tempted by 20...♕f4+!? 21 ♕d2 ♕g3, but then decided to bring my rook into the game first.

21 ♕e3 ♖ad8 22 ♗e2 ♕e7

Black has no clear winning plan but, as already stated, White has no counterplay.

23 ♖he1 ♘d7 24 ♕d4+ ♘f6 25 ♕e3 ♕e5 26 ♗f3 h5 27 a3 ♖fe8 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8



29 ♗d1?

29 ♖d1 is better, when Black should retains his advantage with 29...♖e8.

29...♖d4 30 ♗c2 ♖c4!

The game is over.

31 ♔b1 ♖xc5 32 ♕d2 ♖c4 33 ♕d8 ♘xe4 34 ♗xe4 ♗xe4+ 35 ♘xe4

35 ♔a1 loses to 35...♖xc3.

35...♖xe4 0-1

White lost on time but his position is, of course, lost anyway.

Game 76
Shirov – Adams
Tilburg 1996

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6

Not exactly a new opening in my repertoire, as I used to play it from time to time more than ten years ago. But now, of course, I had to study it all over again.

4...dxc6 5 0-0 f6 6 d4 exd4 7 ♘xd4 c5 8 ♘b3 ♕xd1 9 ♖xd1 ♗g4 10 f3 ♗d7 11 ♘c3 0-0-0

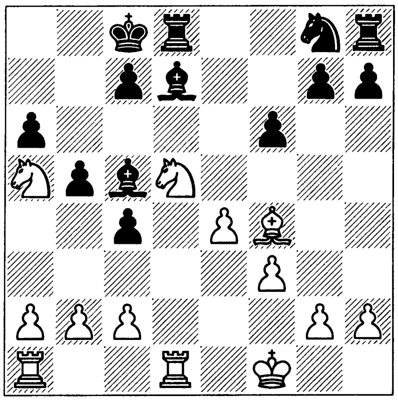
All this could be easily expected from Michael since he plays this line against the Exchange Variation regularly. During my preparation I also suspected that he would go for a known ending where Black obtains excellent compensation for the pawn. Still, I wasn't sure whether it would be so easy to draw and I decided to try it.

12 ♗f4 c4 13 ♘a5 ♗c5+ 14 ♔f1

14 ♔h1 is a different story according to Jan Timman's commentaries on his game against Adams (Belgrade 1995, see *New In Chess* magazine No.1 of 1996) I should mention that in the same source Timman indicated 21...♖d6!, which occurred later on in the present game. I didn't notice this remark in time, maybe because after reading Short's notes to his game against Timman (*New In Chess* No.8 of 1995) I got a feeling that *New In Chess* was somehow more for entertainment than for chess annotations, even though Nigel did enrich my vocabulary.

14...b5 15 ♘d5

B

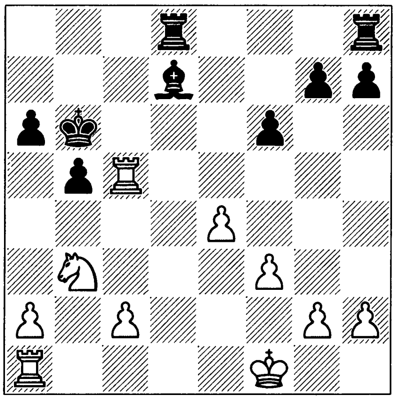


15...♘e7!

15...c6 16 b4! was the way Timman brilliantly beat Adams in the above-mentioned game; no wonder Michael doesn't play this line any more.

16 ♗xc7 ♘xd5 17 ♖xd5 ♔xc7 18 ♖xc5+ ♔b6 19 b4 cxb3 20 ♘xb3

B



It is sufficient to look at the position to see that Black should not lose. However, he still faces some small practical difficulties.

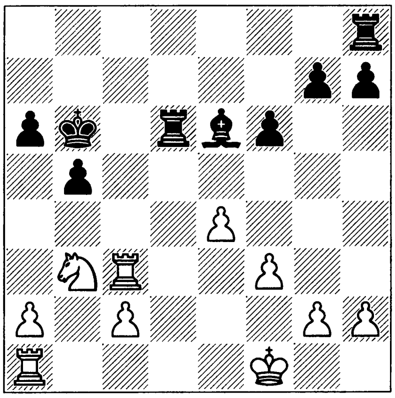
20...♗e6

The other way would be 20...a5 21 ♖c3 b4 22 ♖e3 ♗b5+ and Black has enough for the pawn.

21 ♖c3 ♖d6!

An innovation. Previous experience has been 21...a5 22 a4 b4 23 ♖c5 ♗xb3 24 ♖b5+ ♔a6 25 cxb3 with a clear advantage for White, Kelleher-Adams, New York 1996 and 21...b4 22 ♖e3 ♖c8 23 ♘d4 ♗c4+ 24 ♔e1 ♖hd8 25 ♘e2 with an edge for White, as in J.Benjamin-A.Ivanov, USA ch 1993. 21...♖c8 22 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 23 ♘d4 also fails to equalize.

W



22 a4

I saw no other way to create winning chances. With the text I am at least trying to exchange my isolated pawn for his good one, hoping that one day the b5-pawn might also become weak.

22...♗c4+! 23 ♔f2

23 ♔e1 ♖hd8 promises Black full compensation.

23...♖c8! 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♖b1 b4 26 ♖e3 ♗xb3!

Forcing a drawn rook ending. My hope was to meet 26...♗b5 with 27 ♘a1! and by attacking his pawn get some winning chances, for example 27...♖d2+ 28 ♔g3 ♖c4 29 ♖d3! ♖cxc2 30 ♘xc2 ♗xd3 31 ♖xb4+ ♔c5 32 ♖d4 with a promising position.

27 ♖exb3

Capturing with the pawn leaves White no winning chances as after 27 cxb3 ♖d2+ 28 ♖e2 (not 28 ♔g3?! ♖cc2 29 ♖g1 ♖c3) 28...♖xe2+ 29 ♔xe2 ♖c2+ 30 ♔f1 ♖d2! Black is too active.

27...♖xc2+ 28 ♔e3

The position after 28 ♔g3 ♖dd2 29 ♖xb4+ ♔c7 30 ♖b7+ ♔c6 seemed dead drawn to me, but the text is no great improvement.

28...♖xg2 29 ♖xb4+ ♔c5?!

Not yet a real error, but an indication that Black is deviating from the right course. More natural would be 29...♔c7 30 ♖b7+ ♔d8 31 h4 ♖d7 32 ♖b8+ ♔e7, with a draw.

30 ♖b7 ♖a6 31 ♖1b3 g5?!

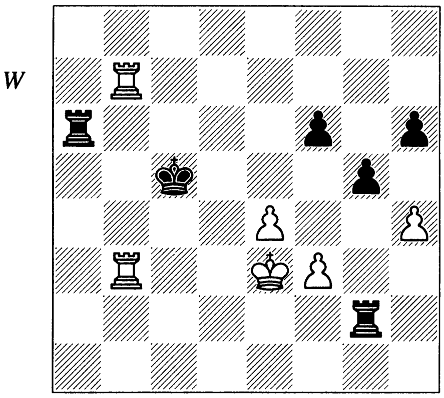
Here I started thinking that I might get some winning chances. Of course, 31...♔d6 would still be an easy draw.

32 h4 h6? *(D)*

32...g4! was correct, when to avoid a forced draw White must continue 33 ♔f4! (33 ♖xh7 ♖g3 34 ♔f4 ♖xf3+ 35 ♖xf3 gxf3 36 ♔xf3 ♔d6 37 ♔f4 ♔e6 is drawn) 33...gxf3 34 ♖xf3 although it seems that Black's counterplay after 34...h5! is sufficient.

33 ♖d3!

The most difficult move in the game, intending to cut Black's king off from his pawns. 33 hxg5 hxg5 34 ♖d3! would also have yielded White some practical winning chances, so it was not easy to choose.



33...gxh4?!

Tempting but wrong as the two remaining White pawns will be a formidable force. 33...g4 was still to be preferred, although White can then make dangerous threats with 34 ♖c7+ ♔b4 35 ♔f4 gxf3 36 ♖xf3 and the black king is still cut off.

34 ♖c7+ ♔b4

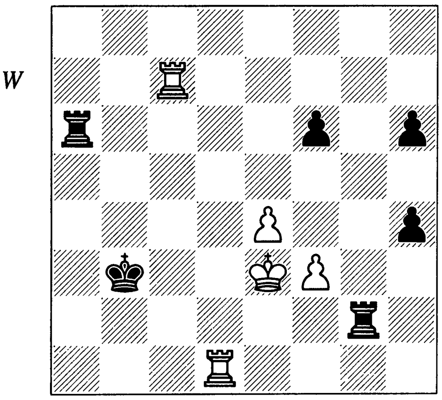
34...♔b6 35 ♖c1 is very unpleasant for Black, for example 35...h3 36 ♖d6+ ♔a7 37 ♖xa6+ ♔xa6 38 ♖c6+ ♔b7 39 ♖xf6 h5 40 ♖f5! h4 41 ♖h5 and wins.

35 ♖d1!

White already has a large advantage. However, the win is not yet clear.

35...♔b3!

Black must now avoid exchanging one pair of rooks, for example 35...h3 36 ♖b1+ ♔a3 37 ♖a1+ ♖a2 38 ♖xa2+ ♔xa2 wins for White after 39 ♖c5!!.



36 ♖h1 f5 37 exf5

Here I was already in slight time-pressure and I am not sure whether 37 e5!? might have been better. Of course, the text is less risky.

37...♖g5 38 ♖b7+ ♔c2!

Going to the right square. 38...♔a2 39 ♖h2+ ♔a3 40 ♖b5! is probably winning for White, for instance 40...♖a4 41 ♖hb2 ♖a6 (41...♖a5 42 ♖2b3+ ♔a2 43 ♖xa5+ ♔xb3 44 ♔f4 h3 45 ♖a1 h2 46 ♖h1 ♖g2 47 f6 wins) 42 ♖5b3+ ♔a4 43 ♖b1 ♖g1 44 ♖xg1 ♔xb3 45 ♖g6 ♖a5 46 ♖xh6 ♖xf5 47 ♖xh4 and the king is fatally cut off along a rank.

39 ♖h2+ ♔c3?

This is the fatal error. After 39...♔c1 Black can still fight, although it seems to me that with accurate play White should win in the end, for example 40 ♖c7+ ♔b1 41 ♖c5 ♖a3+ 42 ♔e4 ♖a4+ 43 ♔e5 ♖g1 44 ♖d5! and the relative king positions will decide the game.

40 ♖bb2

Now the game is over. Black loses his pride and joy, the passed h4-pawn, and he still cannot move his king towards the centre.

40...♔c4 41 ♖xh4+ ♔c5 42 ♖c2+ ♔b5

A sad necessity as 42...♔d5 loses to 43 ♖d4+ ♔e5 44 f4+.

43 ♖h1?!

43 ♖f4 ♖f6 44 ♔e4 might have been a better way to win, but I missed that with the text I lose one of my pawns in return for the pawn on h6.

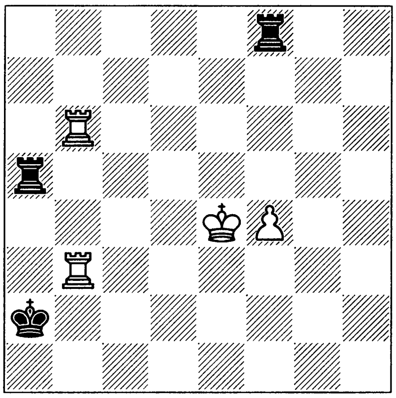
43...♖a3+ 44 ♔f4 ♖a4+ 45 ♔e5 ♖a5! 46 ♖xh6 ♔b4+ 47 ♔e4 ♖gxf5 48 ♖b6+ ♔a3

Nevertheless, the endgame should be an easy win because White can try to exchange rooks, promote his pawn or mate the enemy king; Black cannot avoid all these dangers.

49 ♖c3+ ♔a2

White also wins after 49...♔a4 50 f4.

50 f4 ♖f8 51 ♖cb3 *(D)*



51...♖c5?!

This makes it quicker because now Black cannot avoid the exchange of rooks. 51...♖af5 52 ♖f3 was also hopeless, but 51...♖e8+ 52 ♔f3 ♖e1 would still require some technical accuracy from White. I believe that the best line would be 53 ♖b2+ ♔a1 54 ♖e2 ♖f1+ 55 ♖f2 ♖g1 56 ♖b3 and White will win.

52 ♖b2+ ♔a3 53 ♖b1 ♔a2 54 ♖6b2+ ♔a3 55 ♖b5 ♖e8+ 56 ♔d4 ♖xb5 57 ♖xb5 ♔a4 58 ♖b1 ♖f8 59 ♔e5 ♖e8+ 60 ♔d6 ♖f8 61 ♖f1 1-0

Game 77
Svidler – Shirov
Tilburg 1996

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♘f6 3 d4 ♗g4!?

A very provocative opening which has every reason to be called the 'Portuguese Variation' because a large percentage of the games found in databases involved Portuguese players. Kevin Spraggett, who has lived in Portugal for many years and has picked up many ideas from his local colleagues, has also employed it and he suggested it to me.

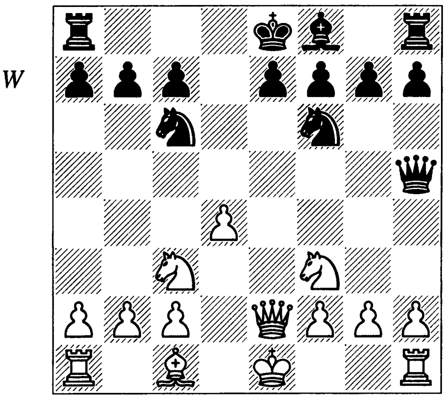
4 ♗e2

One of the funniest variations I've ever seen is 4 f3 ♗f5 5 c4 e6 6 dxe6 ♘c6!, which has occurred in several games. Other critical moves are 4 ♗b5+ and 4 ♘f3.

4...♗xe2 5 ♕xe2 ♕xd5 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 ♘c3

A new move. 'Theory', such as it is in this completely undeveloped system, is 7 c4.

7...♕h5



8 ♗g5?!

During the game I wasn't able to decide whether this was a blunder or a sacrifice – very often the annotator's verdict depends on the result of the game. White gets some initiative for a pawn but it seems insufficient.

Instead White had an interesting opportunity which I was slightly afraid of, namely 8 ♕b5!?. After 8...0-0-0 (8...♕xb5 9 ♘xb5 0-0-0 10 ♘g5! a6 11 ♘xf7 axb5 12 ♘xh8 ♘xd4 13 0-0 ♘xc2 14 ♖b1 is clearly better for White) 9 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 10 ♘g5 ♘xd4 11 0-0 ♘xc2 12 ♖b1 White seems to have good compensation for the sacrificed pawns.

Of course, White could have chosen simple development by 8 ♗e3 or 8 ♗f4, with an equal game.

8...♘xd4 9 ♘xd4 ♕xg5 10 h4!

To be honest, I had overlooked this, counting only on 10 ♘cb5 ♕c5 11 0-0-0 a6 which is very sad for White.

10...♕h5!

Gaining an important tempo.

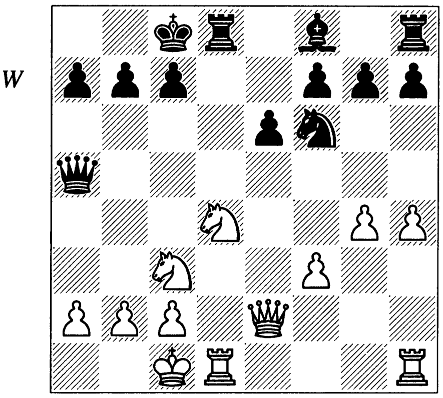
11 f3

11 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 12 ♘cb5 ♖c8! is winning for Black as 13 ♘xa7?! loses to 13...♖d8! 14 ♘b3 c6.

11...0-0-0 12 0-0-0 e6 13 g4 ♕a5! *(D)*

After 13...♕c5?! 14 ♘b3 ♕b6 15 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 16 ♖d1+ ♗d6 17 g5 ♘d7 18 ♘e4 Black is only slightly better.

14 ♘b3



Going for an inferior ending. I was more concerned about 14 g5 and now 14...♘d5?! was my intention, but it proves to be incorrect because of 15 ♘xe6 ♗a3!? (I thought that 15...♗b4!? would be winning but, as Fritz indicates, it leads only to an equal ending after 16 ♘xd8! ♘xc3 17 ♕c4! ♘xa2+ 18 ♔b1 ♘c3+ 19 bxc3 ♗xc3 20 ♕a2 ♖xd8 21 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 22 ♖d1+ ♔e7 23 ♕xa5 ♗xa5) 16 ♘xd8 ♗xb2+ (16...♕xc3? fails to 17 ♕b5 ♖xd8 18 ♖d3 ♕c5 19 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 20 ♖hd1 c6 21 c4 ♗e3+ 22 ♔b1 and White wins) 17 ♔xb2 ♕xc3+ 18 ♔b1 and Black cannot make more than a draw.

However, the simple retreat 14...♘d7! 15 ♘b3 ♕b6 leaves White with no compensation for the pawn.

14...♖xd1+ 15 ♖xd1 ♕a6!

Now 15...♕b6 16 g5 would yield White some counterplay after 16...♘h5 17 ♘d2! or 16...♘d7 17 ♕d2 ♗d6 18 ♘e4.

16 ♕xa6 bxa6 17 ♖d4 ♘d7!

Not an easy move to find. Black is ready to give up his a-pawns since White's pawns on the kingside are also vulnerable.

18 ♖a4 ♘e5 19 ♘d2

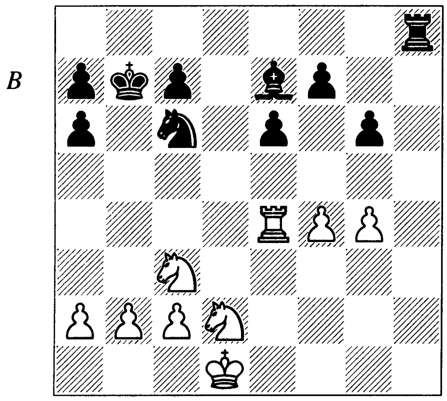
19 ♖xa6 ♔b7 20 ♖a4 ♘xf3 21 ♘a5+ ♔c8 offers White no chances.

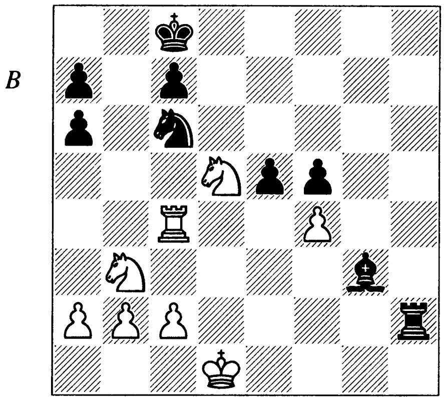
19...♔b7 20 ♔d1 ♗e7 21 h5?!

Playing into Black's hands. 21 ♖e4 ♘c6 22 g5 would be slightly more tenacious, although Black retains a clear advantage.

21...g6 22 ♖e4 ♘c6 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 f4 *(D)*

24...♖h1+?





Having reached a winning position, I started to play ridiculous moves. I rejected 24...♖h4 in view of 25 f5 (25 g5 ♗d6 wins for Black), but the endgame resulting after 25...♖h1+ 26 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 27 ♔xe1 gxf5 (27...♘e5!? is also possible and should be enough to win) 28 gxf5 exf5 should be hopeless for White.

25 ♔e2 f5?!

Activating both Black's and White's pieces at the same time.

26 gxf5 gxf5 27 ♖c4 ♖h2+ 28 ♔d1 e5?

Now Black almost loses his advantage. 28...♗d6 was called for.

29 ♘d5 ♖h1+ 30 ♔e2 ♗h4?!

30...♗d6 should have been preferred, although after 31 fxe5 ♘xe5 (31...♗xe5 32 ♘b3 gives counterplay) 32 ♖f4 c6 33 ♘e3 ♖h2+ 34 ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 35 ♔xf2 it's already very difficult to win since Black's extra pawn is not so valuable.

31 ♘b3!

Here I realised just how far I had gone wrong. There was one last chance – White's time-pressure – and my next move aimed to exploit this factor.

31...♗g3!?

At least Black does not risk losing.

32 ♘c5+ ♔c8 33 ♘b3?!

The following day Peter stated that the simplest way to draw would be 33 ♘d3 ♔d7 34 ♘f6+ ♔d6 35 ♘e8+ ♔d7 36 ♘f6+.

33...♖h2+ 34 ♔d1?!

34 ♔f3 exf4 35 ♘xf4 ♗xf4 36 ♖xc6 ♗d6 would leave Black with a small advantage, but hardly enough to win.

34...exf4!!

An endgame piece sacrifice is quite unusual. Its main motivation was White's clock, although during the game I thought that Black is already almost winning.

35 ♖xc6

Black wins after 35 ♘xf4 ♘e5.

35...f3 36 ♖f6?

Giving up the rook is no way to save the game, whereas 36 c4! was probably enough for a draw. Black has then a choice between:

a) 36...♖h1+ 37 ♔c2 f2 38 ♘d2 ♗d6 39 ♘e3 ♖e1 40 ♖xd6 cxd6 41 ♘xf5 draws.

b) 36...♖xb2 37 ♖f6 ♖b1+ (during the game I missed that 37...f2?? 38 ♖xf5 ♖b1+ is met by 39 ♘c1) 38 ♔c2 (38 ♘c1? ♗f4 39 ♘xf4 ♖xc1+ 40 ♔xc1 f2 wins) 38...f2 39 ♘d2 f1♕ 40 ♘xf1 ♖xf1 41 ♖xf5 is also drawn.

c) 36...♗d6!!. I don't know whether I would have found this move over the board, but it is the only way to pose White serious practical difficulties. White can reply:

c1) 37 c5 leads to a probably lost ending after 37...♖h1+ 38 ♔c2 f2 39 ♘d2 ♔b7 40 cxd6 (40 ♖xd6 cxd6 41 cxd6 ♖h6! wins for Black) 40...♔xc6 41 dxc7 ♔d7 42 ♘e3 ♖e1 43 ♘xf5 f1♕ 44 ♘xf1 ♖xf1.

c2) 37 ♖xa6 (this continuation is also risky) 38...♖h1+ 38 ♔c2 f2 39 ♘d2 ♖e1! 40 ♔d3 f4! 41 ♘c3 ♗e5! 42 c5 ♗xc3 43 ♔xc3 ♖c1+ 44 ♔b3 ♖d1 45 ♖f6 ♖xd2 46 ♖xf4 is better for Black, although I am not sure whether Black can win this.

c3) 37 ♘d2 (this is probably the right way for White to proceed) 37...♔b7 (the line 37...♖h1+ 38 ♔c2 f2 39 ♘e3 ♖e1 40 ♖xd6 cxd6 41 ♘xf5 ♔d7 42 ♘g3 is also a draw) 38 ♖xd6 cxd6 39 ♘xf3 ♖xb2 and although Black can keep on fighting, it's going to be a draw.

36...♖h1+ 37 ♔d2 f2 38 ♖f8+ ♔d7 39 ♖xf5 f1♕ 40 ♖xf1 ♖xf1 41 ♘b4 ♗d6!

A very important move after which White has to turn to passive defence.

42 ♘d3

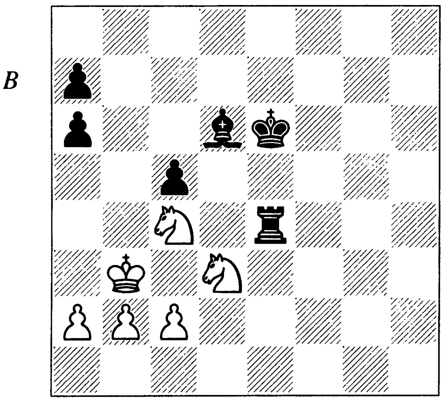
42 ♘xa6?! ♔c6 loses because the white knight will not return, for example 43 ♘b8+ ♔d5.

However, after the text Black's task is not at all easy. The ending is unusual and at the board I couldn't decide whether it was good or bad for me to exchange the bishop for one of his knights. It is also not clear how Black should arrange his pawns. I am not sure that my subsequent play was entirely correct; during the game I spent some time moving back and forth searching for the right plan until suddenly the correct idea became clear.

42...♖f5 43 ♔c3 ♖h5 44 ♘d2 ♔c6 45 ♘c4 ♖h4 46 ♔b3 ♔b5 47 ♘e3

Is the position after 47 ♘xd6+ cxd6 winning? I am not still completely sure of the answer.

47...♖e4 48 ♘d5 ♖d4 49 ♘c3+ ♔c6 50 ♘a4 ♔d5 51 ♘c3+ ♔e6 52 ♘d1 c5! 53 ♘e3 ♖e4 54 ♘c4



54...♗e7!

It took me some time to realise that 54...♔d5? 55 ♘xd6 ♔xd6 56 c4! might be only a draw because Black's king or rook will be stuck defending the c5-pawn and so it will be very difficult to make progress. Fortunately at this point I suddenly saw the correct set-up.

55 ♘f2 ♖h4 56 ♘d3 ♗g5!

The point. White has to abandon the fortress he's built.

57 ♔c3

57 ♘xc5+ ♔d5 58 ♘xa6 ♖xc4 59 ♘b4+ ♔c5 60 ♘a6+ ♔b5 61 a4+ ♖xa4 62 ♘c7+ ♔a5 is winning for Black.

57...♔d5 58 b3 ♖h2

A move without a clear idea that wins the game immediately!

59 b4?

Of course, White should play something like 59 ♘e1. The best winning plan seems to be 59...♖h3+ 60 ♘d3 ♗f6+ 61 ♔d2 ♖h2+ 62 ♔d1 ♗g5, intending to penetrate with the king to c3.

59...♖h4 0-1

White's defence collapses and he therefore resigned.

Game 78
Leko – Shirov
Tilburg 1996

This game was annotated in November 1996 and published in various magazines.

It's curious that four of five games I won in Tilburg finished in the endgame. Three of them I consider interesting and offer for the reader's consideration. The technique I demonstrated in these games is very far from perfect (although against Adams I played rather well) but I think that after analysing them I penetrated a little bit further into the secrets of these endgames.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗c5!?

When playing the Ruy Lopez with Black, I have been the constant follower of Vladimir Malaniuk. I have followed the Ukrainian grandmaster in using both the 'normal Arkhangelsk' and then the 'Arkhangelsk with 6...♗c5'. Now, having seen that both Malaniuk and Onischuk had played 5...♗c5 at the Olympiad, I decided to give it a try.

6 c3 b5 7 ♗b3

The game has transposed to 6...♗c5, but this move-order avoids the line 7 a4.

7...d6 8 a4 ♗g4

I was surprised to learn afterwards that this logical move is new. 8...♗b7 has been played before, but I didn't like it because after 9 d4 ♗b6 White can try to find something more useful than 10 ♖e1.

9 d3 ♖b8 10 axb5 axb5 11 h3 ♗h5 12 ♗e3!?

I didn't expect this.

12...♗xe3 13 fxe3 ♗xf3?!

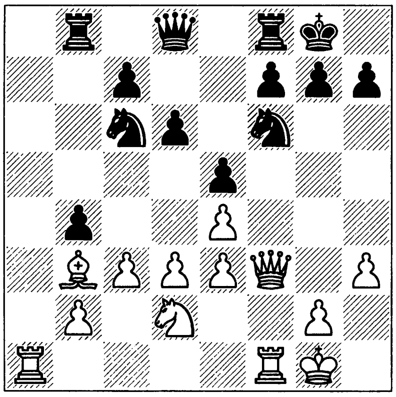
In retrospect I think that the simple 13...♘d7 was better, with equality. I chose the text because the structure arising resembles my game against Short (Erevan Olympiad, 1996) where I somewhat overestimated my chances with White although I finally won. Comparing the present game to that one, I should note that here Black is better developed but on the other hand White's bishop is much more active on b3 than on g2. Therefore I doubt whether exchanging my bishop for his knight was the right decision.

14 ♕xf3 0-0 15 ♘d2

White has a slight advantage.

15...b4

W



16 ♖f2?!

Logical but slow. 16 g4! was better.

16...♖a8! 17 ♖b1

Both 17 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 18 g4?! bxc3 19 bxc3 ♕a1+! 20 ♔g2 ♘d8 and 17 ♖af1 bxc3 18 bxc3 ♖a3 yield Black enough counterplay.

17...♘a5! 18 ♗a4

Not 18 cxb4?! ♘xb3 19 ♘xb3 ♕b8 with an edge for Black.

18...♖b8!

After 18...c5?! 19 c4! the knight on a5 is trapped offside.

19 ♖a1

After 19 c4 b3! Black has counterplay.

19...bxc3 20 bxc3 ♖b2!

Black's activity on the queenside is not to be underestimated and now White himself starts simplifying the position. A few moves later Leko offered me a draw, but I rejected it hoping that the better pawn structure would always give me slight chances in a simplified endgame.

21 ♘f1 ♖xf2 22 ♕xf2 ♘b7!

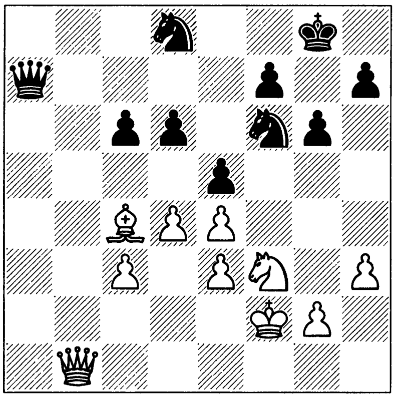
Now Black has a slight advantage.

23 ♗c6 ♘c5 24 ♕c2 ♕b8 25 ♖b1 ♕a7 26 d4 ♘e6 27 ♘d2 ♖b8 28 ♗d5 ♖xb1+ 29 ♕xb1 ♘d8 30 ♔f2 g6 31 ♘f3?

A mistake which went unnoticed as both opponents were a little short of time. 31 ♗c4 would be better.

31...c6 32 ♗c4

B



32...♔g7?

After the game Leko suggested that 32...♕a5! would yield a large advantage. His assessment can be confirmed by the line 33 dxe5 dxe5 34 ♕d3 ♔g7.

33 ♗d3

Now White is again just a little worse.

33...♘e6 34 ♕b2 ♕c7 35 ♗c2 h6! 36 ♔e2?

Another error. The king has nothing to do in the centre and now Black's queen has a chance to penetrate. 36 ♕b4 would be correct, meeting 36...♘g5 by 37 ♘d2.

36...♘g5! 37 ♘xg5

37 ♘d2 d5! would be especially dangerous for White in time-trouble.

37...hxg5 38 ♗d3 g4

I saw the opportunity 38...d5!? but as I was down to my last minute (thank goodness it was a digital one) I preferred a safer continuation. The line 39 exd5 exd4 40 cxd4 ♕g3! just proves how bad White's position is.

39 hxg4 ♕d7 40 ♔f1 ♕xg4

This ending should also be winning. However, I didn't understand the position properly and spent too much time considering possible queen exchanges, which often lead only to a draw. With queens on the board Black should be able to create decisive threats sooner or later. I think I followed the right plan, but just as in the game against Svidler I nearly ruined the job when the win was in sight.

41 ♕e2 ♕h4 42 ♕f2 ♕h1+ 43 ♔e2 ♕a1 44 ♕e1 ♕a2+ 45 ♕d2 ♕e6 46 ♕c2 c5!

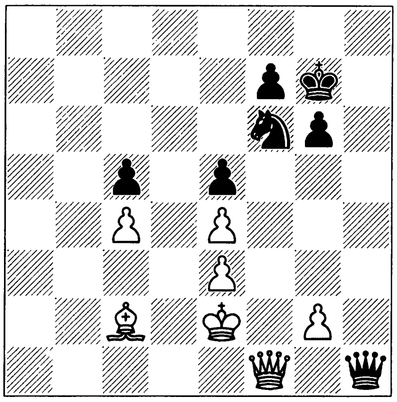
Black wants to force White to play c3-c4.

47 dxc5 dxc5 48 ♔e1 ♕c6! 49 c4 ♕b6

Black is in no hurry.

50 ♕c3 ♘d7 51 ♔e2 ♕e6 52 ♗c2 ♕g4+ 53 ♔f1 ♕g3 54 ♕e1 ♕h2 55 ♕f2 ♘f6! 56 ♔e2 ♕h1 57 ♕f1 *(D)*

B



57...♕h4!

Here is a sample line to show Black's difficulties after an exchange of queens: 57...♕xf1+? 58 ♔xf1 ♔f8 59 ♔e2 ♔e7 60 ♔d3 ♔d6 61 ♗d1 ♔c6 62 ♗f3 ♔b6 63 ♔c3 ♔a5 64 ♔b3 g5 65 g4 is a draw.

58 ♕f2 ♕h2 59 ♕f3

59 ♗d3 ♘e8 is also very good for Black.

59...♘e8!

This should have been the decisive manoeuvre.

60 ♗d3 ♘d6 61 ♕f1 ♕h4! 62 ♕f2

62 ♕f3 f5 63 ♕f2 (63 g3 ♕h2+ 64 ♔e1 fxe4 65 ♗xe4 ♘xc4) 63...♕xf2+ 64 ♔xf2 fxe4 is probably winning for Black.

62...♕e7??

I wanted to play my queen to e6 and I can't explain why I didn't notice 62...♕g4+ 63 ♕f3 ♕e6 and White should simply resign.

63 ♕f1 ♕b7?

It was not too late to play 63...♕h4.

64 ♕a1

Now White has some counterplay.

64...♔f6 65 ♕a5 ♘xe4 66 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 67 ♕xc5 ♕xg2+

Suddenly the technically won position has turned into a very complicated queen ending, which should probably be drawn. Of course, having only 20 minutes left in the sudden death finish, I had little optimism. I am still so disgusted with my play during the preceding stage of the game that I hope the reader will forgive me for not analysing this ending too carefully (it seems a deep analysis and sometimes a CD-ROM is needed). However, I will make some brief remarks.

68 ♔d3 ♕f1+ 69 ♔d2 ♕f2+ 70 ♔d3!

70 ♔d1 probably loses to 70...♕f5.

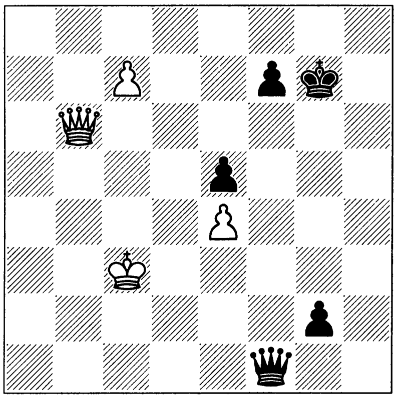
70...♕f5+ 71 ♔c3 g5 72 ♕b6+??

During the game I couldn't see how to win after 72 ♕f8! and have found no solution since.

72...♔g7

Once again Black is completely winning and this time there are no mistakes.

73 c5 g4 74 c6 g3 75 c7 g2 76 e4 ♕f1!



77 ♔d2

77 c8♕ is met by 77...♕c1+.

77...g1♕ 78 ♕xg1+ ♕xg1 79 c8♕ ♕d4+ 80 ♔e2 ♕xe4+ 81 ♔f2 ♕f4+ 82 ♔e2 e4 83 ♕c3+ ♔g6 84 ♕c6+ ♔g5 85 ♕c5+ ♔g4 86 ♕c8+ ♔g3 87 ♕c5 ♔g2 88 ♕d5 ♕f3+ 89 ♔e1 ♕e3+ 0-1

Game 79
Shirov – J. Polgar
Tilburg 1996

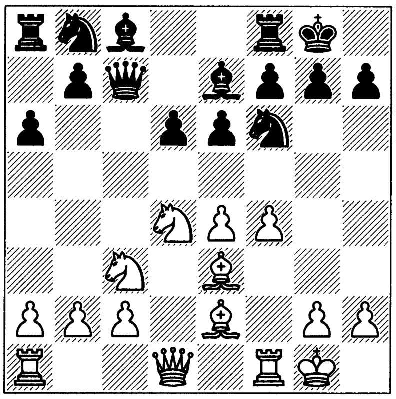
The game was annotated in November 1996 and published in *New In Chess*.

Before the present game I had lost two games in a row and had dropped from the lead almost to the middle of the field. A free day helped me to relax, but who knows what the story would have been if Judit hadn't fallen into some of my old analysis. Anyway, I am satisfied that after so many setbacks (after this game I also lost to Piket) I still managed to finish the tournament in third place by winning in the last round.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2

After some bad games with 6 ♗e3 I decided to switch to a 'less aggressive' set-up.

6...e6 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♗e3 ♕c7 *(D)*



A provocative line. As Vishy Anand once stated there is nothing to be expected from me in this position but the advance of the g-pawn.

10 g4!

Sutovsky had smashed Van Wely and Polgar earlier in the same tournament with this move, giving me even more confidence in White's attacking chances.

10...♖e8

Van Wely continued 10...b5 and Polgar 10...♘c6. The text (with a different move-order) occurred in Shirov-Anand, Buenos Aires 1994. Then I continued 11 g5 ♘fd7 12 ♗h5!? g6 13 ♗g4 and won a complicated battle. Nowadays 12 ♗d3 seems more critical (instead of 12 ♗h5) and this was the way Sutovsky played his games. Why didn't I follow his example? Because I remembered that during my game against Anand I was seriously considering the alternative...

11 f5!?

...but then I decided not to play it. This time I saw less objection to the idea.

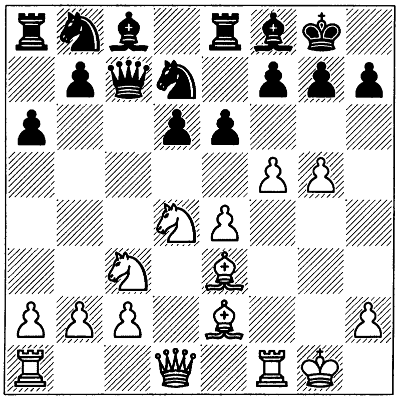
11...♗f8?

This is what Anand suggested in our post-mortem but later the same evening I found a crushing piece sacrifice. Of course, I kept my discovery more or less secret, but when I learned that it had occurred in the rapid game Wolff-Rychagov (Hastings PCA qualifier, 1995), I no longer expected to be able to play it myself. Fortunately the Wolff game didn't get into the main databases.

We shall see that the text move just loses. As I remember, the main reason why

I rejected 11 f5 against Anand was 11...h6 with the idea 12 h4?! d5!.

12 g5 ♘fd7



13 ♘xe6!

This is the killer move. Curiously, the position after Black's 12th move occurred in some other games (Nevednichy-Nisipeanu, Romania 1995, for example) played at a normal time control, and White didn't find this refutation of Black's set-up.

13...fxe6 14 ♗h5

By attacking the rook White gains time to create decisive mating threats. Black has no defence because her pieces are completely misplaced.

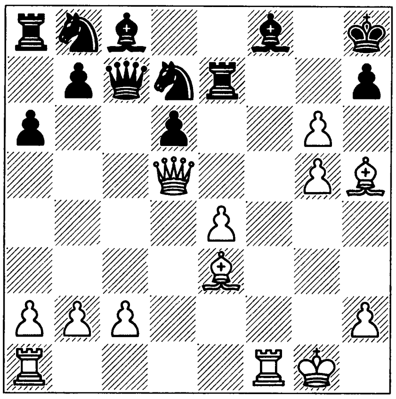
14...g6

14...♕d8 loses by force after 15 fxe6 ♘c5 (15...♘e5 16 ♗f7+ ♔h8 17 ♗xe8 ♕xe8 18 ♘d5 wins) 16 ♗f7+ ♔h8 17 ♗xe8 ♕xe8 18 ♗xc5 dxc5 19 ♘d5 ♖a7 20 ♕h5 g6 21 ♕f3 ♗g7 22 e7 ♔g8 23 ♕b3 ♔h8 24 ♘f6, and Black's fate is rather similar after 14...♖e7 15 fxe6 ♘b6 16 ♕f3 ♕d8 17 ♗xb6 ♕xb6+ 18 ♖f2.

15 fxg6 ♖e7 16 ♘d5!

I don't know whether White has other ways to win the game but this one is simple and effective.

16...exd5 17 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 *(D)*



18 gxh7!

After long thought, I didn't go in for another sacrifice. In fact 18 ♖xf8+?! ♘xf8 19 ♖f1 would probably also have won but I preferred to keep it simple. The following variations justify the second offer, but are not so easy to calculate and be sure about during a game:

a) 19...♘e6 20 ♗d4+ ♔g8 (20...♖g7 21 ♖f7 wins) 21 ♕f5! ♕d7 22 ♕f6 ♖g7 23 ♗g4 ♕e7 24 gxh7+ ♖xh7 25 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 26 ♕g6+ ♖g7 27 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 28 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 29 ♕e8+ ♔h7 30 ♖f7 is decisive.

b) 19...♘xg6! 20 ♗d4+ (not 20 ♗xg6? ♗e6 21 ♗d4+ ♔g8 22 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 23 g6+ ♔g8 24 ♕h5 ♖g7) 20...♖e5 21 ♗xg6 ♕e7 22 ♗xe5+ (22 ♖f7 ♕xg5+ 23 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 24 ♔g1 ♕g5+ is a draw) 22...dxe5 23 ♗xh7 ♕xg5+ 24 ♔h1 ♘c6 (24...♔xh7 25 ♕f7+ ♕g7 26 ♕h5+ ♔g8 27 ♕e8+ ♔h7 28 ♕xc8 wins) 25 ♖g1 ♕xg1+ 26 ♔xg1 ♔xh7 27 ♕f7+ with a clear advantage for White.

18...♖xh7 19 ♗g6!?

A long time ago Vladimir Bagirov taught me (I believe that he himself was taught it by Vladimir Makogonov) about brilliancy in chess – 'A brilliancy is when you attack a piece and there is nothing to defend it'. This is exactly the case with the rook on h7; once again the co-ordination of Black's pieces speaks for itself.

However White had a second winning line which would have been even better: 19 g6! ♖g7 (19...♖e7 20 ♗g4 wins) 20 ♗g4 ♖xg6 21 ♗d4+! (I considered the move 19 g6 during the game but I probably overlooked this very important check) 21...♘f6 (21...♘e5 22 ♖xf8+ ♔h7 23 ♗xe5 ♖xg4+ 24 ♔h1 dxe5 25 ♖f7+ ♖g7 26 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 27 ♕xe5 wins) 22 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 23

♗xf6+ ♗g7 24 ♕h5+ ♔g8 25 ♕e8+ ♔h7 26 ♗xc8 ♗xf6 27 ♗f5+ finishes the game.

19...♗g7

The point of White's play was that 19...♕c6 is impossible due to 20 ♖xf8+ ♘xf8 21 ♗d4+ ♖g7 22 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 23 ♕f7+ ♔h8 24 ♕xf8 mate. Nor could Black move his rook, e.g.: 19...♖g7 20 ♗d4 ♘c6 21 ♖f4 with inevitable mate, or 19...♖e7 20 ♖f4 ♗h6 21 ♖h4 and White wins.

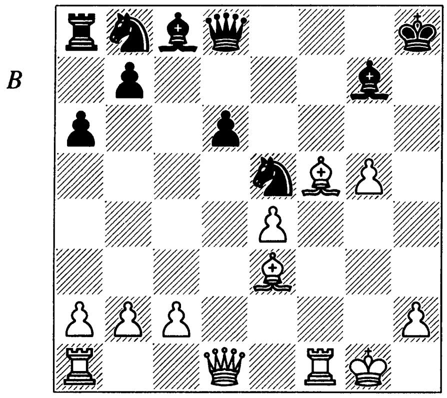
20 ♗xh7 ♕d8

20...♔xh7 21 g6+ ♔xg6 22 ♕f5 mate.

21 ♗f5

I was slightly lacking in self-confidence and so chose the more secure continuation instead of the forced win 21 ♕f7! ♔xh7 (or 21...♘e5 22 ♕h5 ♗g4 23 ♕h4) 22 ♕h5+ ♔g8 23 g6 ♘f6 (23...♘f8 24 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 25 ♖f1+ ♔e8 26 ♕d5 ♕e7 27 ♕g8+ ♔d7 28 ♖f7 wins) 24 ♖xf6 ♕xf6 25 ♖f1 and Black is lost.

21...♘e5 22 ♕d1!



22...♗xf5

The alternatives 22...♕e8 23 g6 and 22...♔g8 23 ♕h5 ♗xf5 24 exf5 are no better.

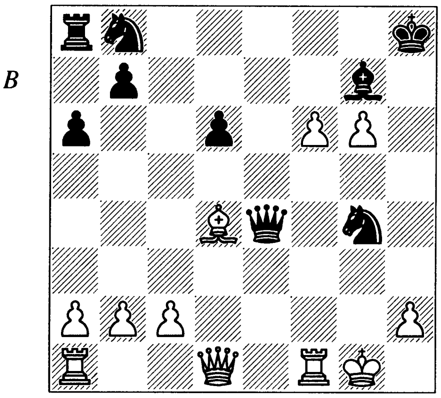
23 exf5 ♕e8 24 g6!

The simplest.

24...♘g4

24...♘xg6 25 ♕h5+ ♔g8 26 ♖ae1 wins.

25 ♗d4 ♕e4 26 f6 *(D)*



26...♘c6

It was a pity not to be allowed to finish the game off with the queen sacrifice 26...♘xf6 27 ♕h5+! ♔g8 (27...♘xh5 28 ♖f8 mate) 28 ♗xf6 ♕e3+ 29 ♖f2 and wins. Of course, 26...♗xf6 27 ♗xf6+ ♘xf6 28 ♖xf6 is also hopeless.

27 fxg7+ ♔g8 28 ♖f8+ ♖xf8 29 gxf8♕+ ♔xf8 30 ♕f1+ 1-0

Black resigned as she gets mated.

Game 80

Shirov – Short

Erevan Olympiad 1996

The game was annotated in October 1996 and published in various magazines.

The match Spain-England was quite important since after winning it Spain was in second place. Unfortunately the Olympiad could not be stopped at that moment...

I had very mixed feelings after this game. On the one hand I beat a strong opponent and my play after the first time-control was fascinating and good, but to make such a 40th move...

1 e4 e6 2 d3

I had no strength to move the pawn further.

2...♘c6 3 ♘f3 e5!?

This didn't come as a surprise as I already faced it once against Ivanchuk (at Novgorod, 1994). On that occasion I didn't get anything special from the opening, but this time I had an idea.

4 ♘c3!

A novelty.

4...♘f6 5 g3

This is the point. I am playing the so-called 'Glek system' (e.g. 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 g3) but with an extra tempo! White should have a slight advantage.

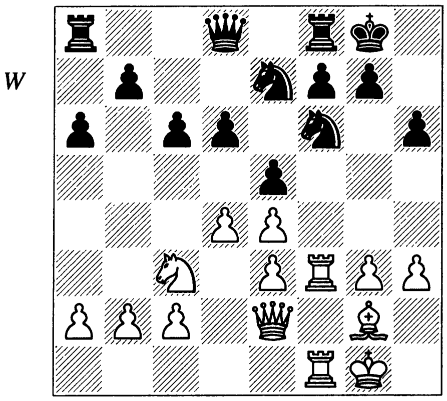
5...♗c5 6 ♗g2 d6 7 0-0 a6 8 ♗e3 ♗g4 9 h3 ♗xe3 10 fxe3 ♗xf3 11 ♖xf3?!

I don't like this move because it spoils the co-ordination of White's pieces. 11 ♕xf3 would have been better.

11...♘e7 12 ♕e2 c6 13 ♖af1 h6

A good way to exploit my mistake on the 11th move would have been 13...♕b6!? 14 ♘d1 0-0-0, with unclear play.

14 d4 0-0



14...♕b6!? deserved attention. I would probably have answered 15 ♕d2.

15 ♖xf6!?

Why not, if he allows it?

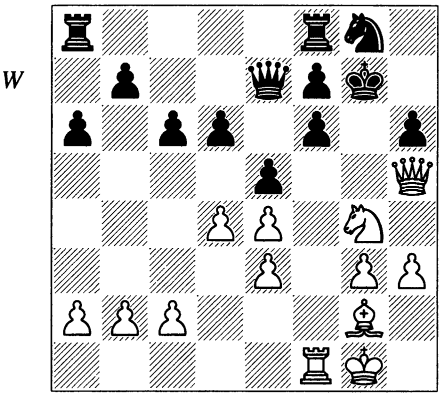
15...gxf6 16 ♘d1!

A very important finesse. White can only create dangerous threats by quickly bringing the knight towards the black king. 16 ♖xf6?! ♘g6 would not promise any real attack, and might even be slightly better for Black.

16...♔h8

Probably the best decision. Variations such as 16...♔g7 17 ♕g4+ ♘g6 18 h4 (intending to meet 18...♕c8 by 19 ♕f3!), 16...♘g6 17 ♘f2 and 16...f5? 17 exf5 f6 18 dxe5 dxe5 19 ♘c3 seem very favourable for White.

17 ♕h5 ♘g8 18 ♘f2 ♕e7 19 ♘g4 ♔g7 *(D)*



20 ♖xf6?!

There was no reason to take the queen immediately as Black has no useful moves. 20 h4 ♖ae8 21 c3 would have been preferable, with some advantage for White.

20...♕xf6 21 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 22 ♕f5 ♖ae8 23 g4 ♖e7!

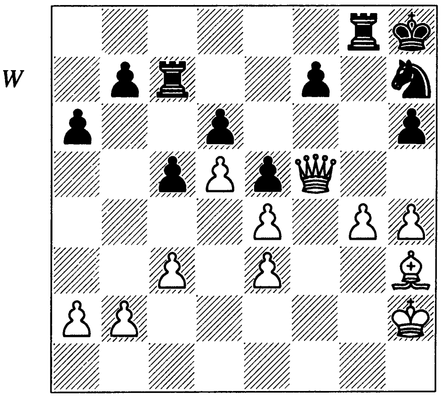
With this precise move Black controls the d7-point and should hold the game.

24 d5

24 g5 ♘h7 25 h4 ♖g8 leads nowhere.

24...♖c7 25 c3 ♘h7 26 ♔h2 c5 27 h4 ♖g8 28 ♗h3 ♔h8??

28...♖h8 would probably be enough for a draw as I don't see any effective plan for White.



29 ♕h5!

Now Black is just lost.

29...♔g7

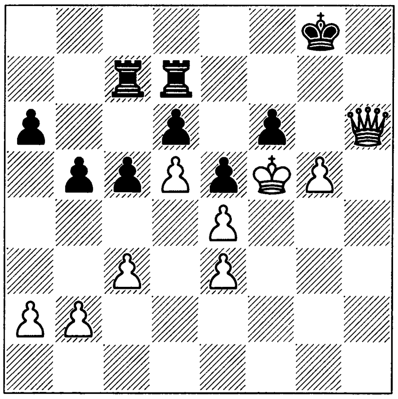
29...♖g6 30 g5 hxg5 31 ♗f5 ♔g7 32 hxg5 is an even shorter story.

30 g5 hxg5 31 hxg5 ♖d8 32 ♗f5 ♘f8 33 ♕h6+ ♔g8 34 ♕f6 ♖dd7

A sad necessity.

35 ♔g3 ♘h7 36 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 37 ♔g4 b5 38 ♕h6+ ♔g8 39 ♔f5 f6

This desperate move is the only chance.



40 g6??

Probably I should give even three question marks to this move, made while having more than one minute left to think. 40 gxf6 would win very quickly e.g. 40...♖h7 41 ♕g6+ ♔f8 42 ♔e6 ♖cd7 43 b4 c4 44 a3 ♖hf7 45 ♕h6+ ♔g8 46 ♕h5 and Black is in zugzwang. The text doesn't throw the win away yet but it results in wasted time and energy – something a chess player should always be careful to conserve.

40...♖e7 41 ♔xf6

The time control has been reached. Short played his next move quickly.

41...♖cd7

Both here and later on Short prefers passive defence. He could have created considerable practical problems had he played 41...a5 or 41...c4 trying to block the queenside. In both cases White would only be able to win with very accurate play – here is a brief analysis of those tries:

a) 41...a5!? 42 a4! (not 42 ♕h5? a4 and the blockade is set up) 42...b4 (42...bxa4 43 ♕h5 a3 44 bxa3 a4 45 ♕d1 ♖a7 46 ♕e2 wins) 43 cxb4 axb4 (or 43...cxb4 44 ♕h5 followed by ♕e2, penetrating on the queenside) 44 b3! and now:

a1) 44...♖b7 45 ♕h5 c4 46 ♕e2 ♖ec7 (46...♖bc7 47 bxc4 ♖e8 48 c5 ♖xc5 49 g7 wins) 47 ♕g4 ♖b8 48 ♕e6+ ♔h8 49 ♕xd6 ♖bc8 50 bxc4 with an easy win.

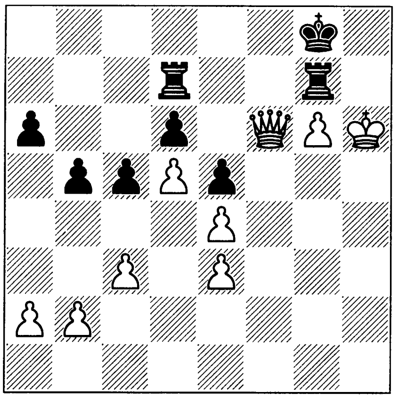
a2) 44...c4 45 bxc4 b3 (45...♖b7 46 c5 dxc5 47 ♕h3 ♖e8 48 d6) 46 c5 b2 47 ♕h1 ♖b7 48 c6 b1♕ 49 ♕xb1 ♖xb1 50 ♔xe7 winning the rook for the c-pawn.

b) 41...c4!? (intending ...a5-a4) 42 b3! b4 (42...a5 43 bxc4 bxc4 44 ♕h5 a4 45 ♕d1 ♖a7 46 ♕e2 ♖ac7 47 ♕b2 ♖b7 48 ♕a3 and 42...cxb3 43 axb3 a5 44 c4 bxc4 45 bxc4 a4 46 c5 both win for White) 43 bxc4 bxc3 44 ♕h2 ♖e8 45 ♔g5 and again White wins.

42 ♕h5

Having thought for a long time, I found the winning plan if Black plays passively. However, I was still afraid there might be some tricks.

42...♖g7 43 ♕f5 ♖ge7 44 ♔g5 ♖g7 45 ♕e6+ ♔f8 46 ♕f6+ ♔g8 47 ♔h6



47...♖ge7

Here, too, the pawn moves deserved attention but probably would not have saved the game:

a) 47...a5 48 a4 bxa4 49 ♕e6+! (49 ♕f1?? ♖xg6+ 50 ♔xg6 ♖g7+ is a draw) 49...♔f8 50 ♕g4 and wins.

b) 47...c4 and now:

b1) 48 b3? b4 49 ♕f1 (49 ♕e6+ ♔f8 50 ♕f5+ ♔e8! is unclear) 49...♖xg6+! 50 ♔xg6 ♖g7+ 51 ♔h5 ♖h7+ 52 ♔g4 ♖g7+ 53 ♔f3 ♖f7+ 54 ♔e2 ♖xf1 55 ♔xf1 bxc3 56 ♔e2 cxb3 57 axb3 ♔f7 58 ♔d3 ♔e7 59

♔xc3 ♔d7 60 ♔b4 ♔c7 61 ♔a5 ♔b7 62 b4 ♔a7 63 b5 axb5 64 ♔xb5 ♔b7 with a draw.

b2) 48 ♕e6+! ♔f8 49 ♕f5+ ♔g8 (alternatively, 49...♔e8 50 ♕f6 wins) 50 b3 b4 51 bxc4 bxc3 52 c5 c2 53 c6! c1♕ 54 cxd7 ♕xe3+ 55 ♔h5 ♕e2+ 56 ♔g5 and White wins.

48 c4!

Now I was again confident that White has a winning position. The threat is 49 b4!.

48...b4

48...bxc4 would still call for precise play, e.g.: 49 ♕f1 ♖h7+ 50 ♔g5! (not 50 gxh7+?? ♖xh7+ and Black draws) 50...♖h2 51 ♕f5! ♖e7 52 ♔f6 ♖e8 53 ♕d7 ♖f8+ 54 ♔e6 ♖h6 55 ♔xd6 ♖xg6+ 56 ♔xe5 and White wins since he has too many passed pawns.

49 ♕f3 ♖b7

Or 49...♖h7+ 50 ♔g5 and wins.

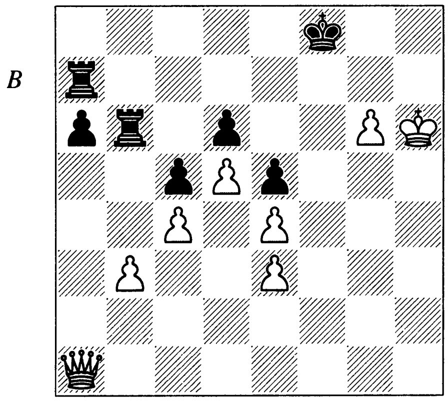
50 ♕d1 ♖b8 51 ♕a4 ♖b6 52 b3!

Accuracy is still important! Variations such as 52 g7? ♖b8 53 ♕xa6 ♖xg7 54 ♕xd6 ♖h7+ 55 ♔g5 ♖g7+ 56 ♔h4 (56 ♔f5 ♖f8+ 57 ♔xe5 is unclear) 56...♖f8!, which leads to a draw, or 52 a3 b3!, would have been very unpleasant for me as I was now in time-trouble for the second time.

52...♔f8 53 a3!

Finally opening the queenside. Now I could finish the game comfortably.

53...bxa3 54 ♕xa3 ♖a7 55 ♕a1!



55...♔g8 56 ♕f1 ♖bb7 57 ♕f6 ♖d7 58 b4 cxb4 59 c5 dxc5 60 ♕xe5 1-0

Black resigned in view of the obvious 60...♖d8 61 ♕e6+ ♔f8 62 ♕f6+ ♔e8 63 g7.

Game 81

Shirov – Kasparov

Erevan Olympiad 1996

The game was annotated in October 1996 and published in various magazines.

After the game Kasparov stated that I saved this game by a long series of only moves. I thought exactly the same about him. Who is right? Probably both.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♗b5+

This made Kasparov think for a while. I remember that some time ago, having lost to Ivanchuk, he stated that White only plays 3 ♗b5+ when he wants a draw. I wouldn't be so sure...

3...♗d7

Diverging from his usual 3...♘d7.

4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5 c4 ♘c6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 d4 ♗g7!?

A very interesting novelty which, as he said afterwards, he had already practised in a training game against Rublevsky. Now White has a hard choice between 8 ♗e3, which is completely unpretentious because the bishop normally aims for g5 in this system, and the text. The usual line is 7...cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♗g7 9 ♘de2.

8 d5 ♗xc3+!

This is the point. Black forces a pawn structure similar to a favourable Nimzo-Indian.

9 bxc3 ♘a5 10 0-0!?

For the moment it is not essential to defend the pawn. 10 ♘d2 looked rather slow.

10...f6!

Very strong. 10...♘xc4 11 ♕e2 ♘e5 12 ♘xe5 dxe5 13 f4 would yield White a dangerous initiative.

11 ♘d2

Now this seems necessary.

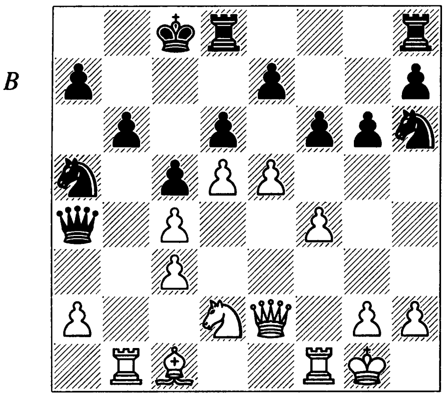
11...b6 12 ♕e2?!

But this is definitely wrong. I rejected 12 f4 in view of 12...♘h6, but maybe I should have chosen 12 ♖b1. The position after the logical continuation 12...♘h6 13 ♘b3 ♘xb3 14 axb3 ♘f7 15 f4 0-0 is quite complicated and appears about equal to me.

12...♕a4! 13 f4 ♘h6 14 e5 0-0-0

Here I sank into thought and realised that my queenside is practically stalemated. Thus I decided to at least make an active move with my rook.

15 ♖b1



15...♘f5?!

After the game Kasparov was very critical of this move and suggested 15...♖hf8! instead. He was completely correct in that after 16 e6 f5!, intending to bring the knight to e4 via f6, Black has the advantage.

16 g4

Risky but necessary. 16 e6 h5 is very annoying for White as he can not do anything against the plan ...♔c7, ...♖b8, ...a6, ...b5 and so on.

16...♘h4?!

This gives me a breathing space. I was afraid of 16...♘g7 and although I wanted to continue 17 exf6 (17 e6 f5 18 h3 fxg4 19 hxg4 h5 is awful for White) 17...exf6 18 f5, I didn't have much confidence in this line.

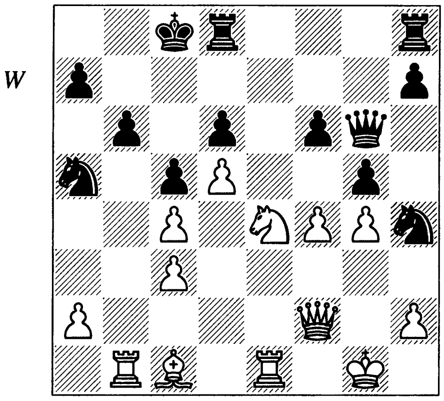
17 exf6 exf6 18 ♕f2! g5 19 ♘e4!

White initiates very sharp play and is suddenly completely OK. After lengthy thought, Kasparov goes for a long and practically forced drawing line.

19...♕e8!?

19...♕xc4 20 ♘xf6 seems very attractive for White.

20 ♖e1 ♕g6

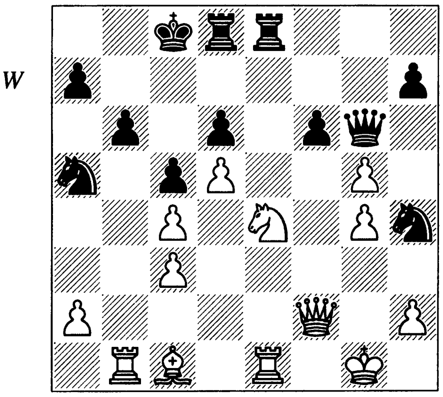


21 fxg5

Having just twenty minutes left to reach the time-control at move 40, I rejected the tempting 21 f5 because the position after 21...♕g7 (21...♕f7 22 ♘xg5 fxg5 23 ♗xg5 ♖dg8 is also unclear) 22 ♘g3 ♘xc4 23 ♘h5 ♕f7 24 ♖e6 ♘e5 didn't appeal to me at all, for example 25 h3 ♖he8! or 25 ♘xf6 h5! 26 ♖xe5 (26 gxh5? ♖h6 wins for Black) 26...♕xf6 27 ♖e6 ♕xc3 and Black is much better. However, White has a stronger line, namely 25 ♕e2! ♖he8 26 ♕e4! and his compensation for the pawn seems quite good. Thus 21 f5 would have been a real, though risky, winning try while the text leads to a forced draw.

21...♖he8!

The only move.



22 ♘xd6+! ♖xd6 23 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 24 ♗f4!

24 ♕xh4 ♕e4 25 ♖a1 ♘xc4 can only favour Black. Having made the intermediary bishop move I thought I was on top but Kasparov had a surprise ready.

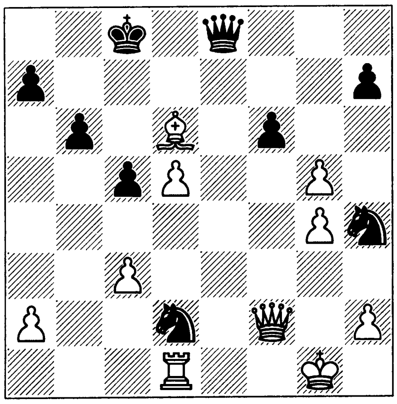
24...♘xc4!

This came like lightning from a clear sky. I had counted on 24...♕e4 25 ♖f1 ♖d7 26 ♕xh4 fxg5 27 ♕xg5 ♘xc4 28 ♕g8+ or 24...♖d7 25 ♕xh4 fxg5 26 ♕xg5 ♘xc4 27 ♕f5, with a clear plus for White in both cases. However, 24...♕g6 25 ♖e1 would be a sensible alternative to the text and now:

a) 25...fxg5? 26 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 leads to a spectacular mate after 27 ♕f7! ♘b7 28 ♕e8+ ♘d8 29 ♖e6! ♘f3+ 30 ♔f1!! ♘d2+ 31 ♔e1! ♘f3+ 32 ♔d1 ♕xh2 33 ♖c6+ ♔b7 34 ♕d7+ ♔a6 35 ♕c8+ ♘b7 (35...♔a5 36 ♖xc5+ bxc5 37 ♕xc5+ ♔a4 38 ♕b4 mate) 36 ♖xb6+! ♔xb6 (36...axb6 37 ♕a8 mate) 37 ♕c6+ ♔a5 38 ♕b5 mate.

b) 25...♖d8! 26 ♕xh4 fxg5 27 ♕xg5 ♕xg5 28 ♗xg5 ♖g8 29 ♗h4 (29 h4 h6 should be a draw) 29...♖xg4+ 30 ♗g3 ♔d8 31 ♖f1 ♔e8 and it seems that everything ends with a draw by repetition after 32 ♖e1+ ♔d8.

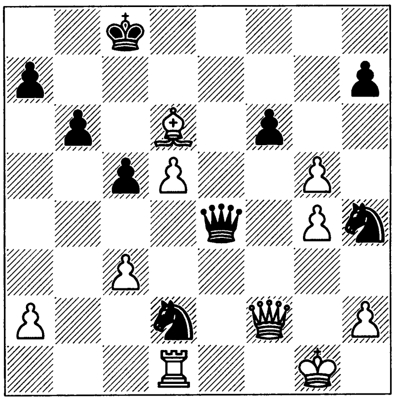
25 ♗xd6 ♘d2! 26 ♖d1



Here I was completely sure that my opponent had miscalculated something and that the game was over. But ...

26...♕e4!!

26...♘hf3+ 27 ♔h1 ♕e4 28 ♕g2! or 26...♘df3+ 27 ♔f1 would simply lose for Black, but after the text it's White who has to be careful.



27 ♗g3

I forgot that in the line 27 ♖xd2 ♕b1+ 28 ♕f1 ♘f3+ 29 ♔f2 ♕xf1+ 30 ♔xf1 he takes my rook with check, when 30...♘xd2+ 31 ♔e2 ♘e4 is better for Black! Thus I already had no choice. After playing 27 ♗g3 I offered a draw and the reaction was 'But I have a perpetual, can I think a while?' I said OK and after some five minutes Kasparov agreed to call it a day. He could have tried 27...♘hf3+ 28 ♔h1 ♘e1+ 29 ♔g1 ♘df3+ 30 ♔f1 ♘c2 but after the precise 31 d6! (not 31 ♗f4 ♕xf4 32 ♕xc2 ♘xh2+ 33 ♔g1 ♘xg4 and Black is slightly better) 31...♔d7 32 ♗f4 ♕xf4 33 ♕xc2 ♘xg5+ 34 ♕f2 ♕xg4 35 ♕e2! White is by no means worse.

½-½

Game 82

Ye Jiangchuan – Shirov

Erevan Olympiad 1996

The game was annotated in October 1996 and published in various magazines.

It's not a bad feeling to beat the first board of the team representing a nation of 1.2 billion, is it?

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 a6

Having played the white side of the Najdorf several times against Gelfand, I decided that it was time to employ it from the other side.

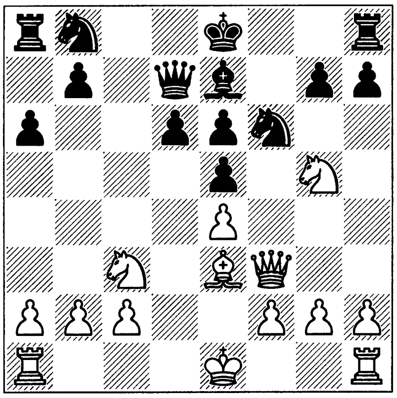
6 ♗e3 e5 7 ♘f3

In previous games the Chinese player had usually played 7 ♘b3. As so often happens when facing something unexpected, I immediately mixed up the move-order.

7...♗e7 8 ♗c4 ♗e6?!

I forgot to include 8...0-0 9 0-0 before playing this move.

9 ♗xe6 fxe6 10 ♘g5! ♕d7 11 ♕f3



Here I realised that I had done something wrong. White's threats seemed very dangerous and after due consideration I decided to take radical measures.

11...h6?!

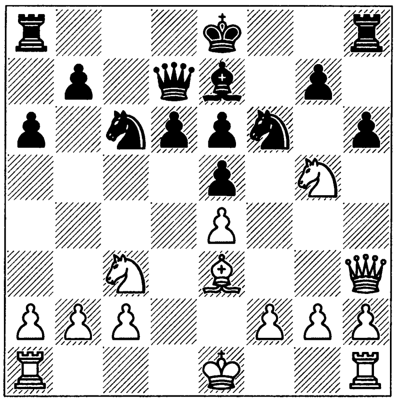
The theoretical move is 11...d5, although I didn't like the position after 12 exd5 exd5 13 0-0-0 at all. However, the text is just bluff.

12 ♕h3 ♘c6!? *(D)*

12...♖g8 would fail to 13 ♘xe6 ♔f7 14 ♘d5!, so Black had no choice.

13 0-0-0?

Timid and wrong. The natural move is, of course, 13 ♘a4. My intention was to answer it with 13...♘b4 14 ♘b6 ♘xc2+ 15 ♔d2 ♕c6 , but I didn't notice that after 16 ♖ac1 hxg5 17 ♕xh8+ ♔f7 18 ♘xa8 ♘xe4+ 19 ♔d1 ♘xe3+ 20 fxe3 ♕d5+ (the alternative 20...♕a4+ 21 b3 ♘f2+ 22 ♔e1 ♕a5+ 23 ♔f1 ♕d2 24 ♕h5+ ♔f6 25 ♖e1 ♘xh1 26 ♕e2 is also hopeless) 21 ♔c2 the white king easily escapes and Black is lost. Thus Black should probably choose 13...♗d8 instead, although his position after 14 0-0-0 is still quite unattractive.



13...♖c8!

With this precise move Black already takes over the initiative!

14 ♔b1

It was difficult to find anything better as the e6-pawn is taboo while 14 ♘a4 could now be well met by 14...♘b4 15 ♘b6 ♖xc2+ 16 ♔b1 ♕c6! and White's position is busted.

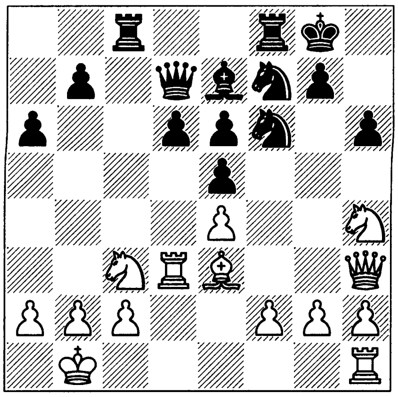
14...♘d8!

The most solid and logical continuation. White's reply is forced.

15 ♖d3

15 ♘f3 ♖xc3 16 bxc3 ♘xe4 looks very dangerous.

15...0-0 16 ♘f3 ♘f7 17 ♘h4?!



17 g4 might have been a better try but I believe that it was already time to play

quietly, for example 17 ♘d2 b5 18 f3 with approximate equality.

17...♖c4!

Straightforward play is the best way to refute White's strategy.

18 ♘g6 ♖fc8 19 f4?

More aggression and more trouble for White. Surprisingly, my opponent offered me a draw here, which I, of course, rejected. 19 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 20 f3 might have been his best but after 20...b5 21 ♖c1 ♕e8! Black is still much better. The same is true after; 19 f3 ♗d8!.

19...exf4 20 ♗xf4 ♘xe4 21 ♘d5

The same style!

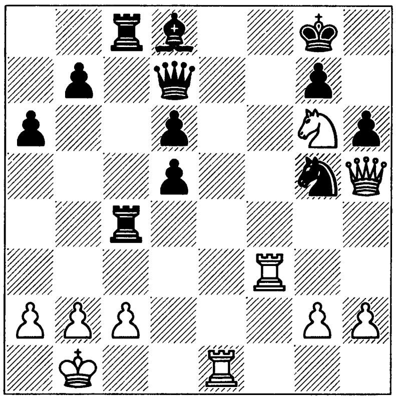
21...♗d8 22 ♖e1 ♘fg5!

Of course, not 22...♘f2? 23 ♕xe6 ♕xe6 24 ♖xe6 ♘xd3 25 ♖e8+ ♔h7 26 ♘f8+ with draw by perpetual check.

23 ♗xg5 ♘xg5 24 ♕h5 exd5

Is the game over?

25 ♖f3! *(D)*



25...♗a5

It took me some time to notice that 25...♘xf3 'fails' to 26 ♕xd5+ ♔h7 (the only move) 27 ♘f8+ ♔h8 28 ♘g6+ (not 28 ♘xd7? ♘xe1) 28...♔h7 29 ♘f8+ with a draw. It was possible to try 25...♗f6 26 ♖xf6 ♖xc2! (of course not 26...gxf6? 27 ♘e7+ ♔h8 28 ♕xh6+ ♘h7 29 ♘g6+ ♔g8 30 ♖e7 and White wins) with the idea 27 ♘e7+? ♕xe7 winning for Black, but the text is even better.

26 ♘e7+ ♔h7

26...♔h8 27 ♘g6+ ♔h7 also wins.

27 ♖f6!

A final attempt to give Black a heart attack. 27 ♕g6+ ♔h8 would lose at once.

27...♕e8

The only move, but sufficient to parry White's threats.

0-1

4 The Botvinnik variation

Although I have done a lot of deep opening analyses in my life, I still cannot consider myself a strong theoretician. This doesn't, however, mean that I don't like working on theory. And if you were to ask me which opening I like to investigate more than any other, I wouldn't hesitate for even a second – the Botvinnik variation! To find the truth in this opening one needs to analyse certain lines very deeply and always make very cool assessments because many of the positions go against standard chess principles.

The complexity of the Botvinnik variation has always greatly attracted me, and it was always traditional to analyse it in Latvia since Tal often played it. Of course Bagirov was also an expert on it – after all it was he who had to oppose Polugayevsky's famous idea in lengthy analyses (Bagirov used to be Polugayevsky's main trainer) before it was played against Torre in Moscow 1981.

I should also mention that Alexander Shabalov (now living in the USA) played many exciting games in the Botvinnik variation and several other Latvian players participated in theoretical analyses. In fact the trio Tal-Bagirov-Shabalov were making valuable discoveries as early as the beginning of the 1980s; the game Kasparov-Tal (USSR 1983) was one of the fruits of their joint work. Their other important discovery, in 1984(!), was ...♖d4!!, which came into practice only in the game Bareyev-Oll (Moscow rapid, 1992) – see the game Nikolić-Shirov in this book. Having lost touch with Latvian chess over the past few years, I have begun to work less and less on the Botvinnik and my results have gone down. But I don't think I will ever give up investigating my favourite line.

This chapter is in no sense a theoretical article. I would just like to present all the serious games (i.e. games with a normal time limit in serious competitions) that I have played in the Botvinnik variation, arranged in chronological order, plus a few others. I will also explain something about the history of the line, but the reader should forgive me if I sometimes reduce my commentaries to brief descriptions – the last word on the Botvinnik variation hasn't been said yet and I might still play it with either colour, who knows ...

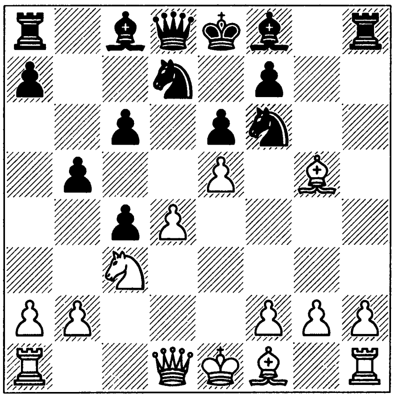
My first experience with this opening came in January 1987. I was playing in the Soviet Junior Championship and at that time I had just switched from 1 e4 to 1 d4. When I was to due to play Gata Kamsky with White, I found out that he sometimes goes for the Botvinnik. Of course, I didn't really know any theory then, but after looking at a few *Informators* I decided to join the fight.

Shirov – Kamsky

USSR Junior Championship, Kapsukas 1987

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7



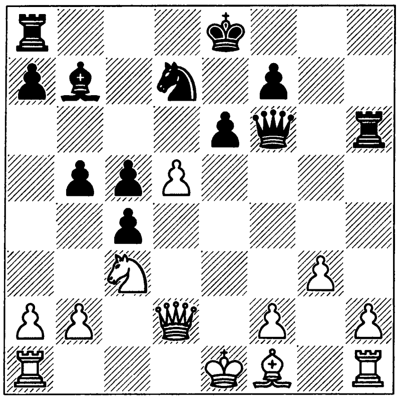
11 exf6

I knew that 11 g3 was more popular, and it would therefore have required more knowledge for me to play it.

11...♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♗h6

I knew practically nothing about this line.

14 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 15 ♕d2 ♕xf6!?



Remember this position! It will reappear later in the chapter.

16 ♘e4!?

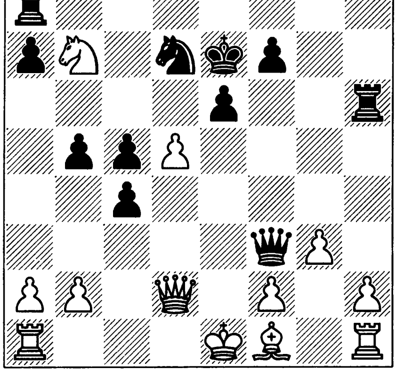
Nowadays 16 0-0-0 is more fashionable. More about this later.

16...♕f3

16...♕e5 is probably wrong due to 17 0-0-0!

17 ♘d6+ ♔e7 18 ♘xb7

18 ♕xh6 ♔xd6 leads to an unclear position.



18...♕xh1

In fact this move in fact just loses. An example of 18...♖h5 is Van Wely-Moll, Amsterdam (simultaneous) 1994: 19 ♖g1! (19 d6+ ♔e8 20 ♖g1 c3 21 bxc3 ♖e5+ 22 ♗e2 ♖xe2+ 23 ♕xe2 ♕xc3+ 24 ♔f1 ♕xa1+ 25 ♔g2 is slightly better for White, but a draw was agreed here in Ionov-Popov, St Petersburg 1995) 19...c3 20 ♕c2!! (20 bxc3 ♖e5+ 21 ♗e2 ♖xe2+ 22 ♕xe2 ♕xc3+ 23 ♔f1 ♕xa1+ 24 ♔g2 ♕e5 is only a little better for White) 20...♖e5+ 21 ♗e2 cxb2 (21...♖h8 22 h4 ♕xd5 23 ♘a5 wins for White) 22 ♖d1 (now White is winning) 22...exd5 23 ♕xb2 ♖b8 24 ♘xc5 ♖xe2+ 25 ♕xe2+ ♕xe2+ 26 ♔xe2 ♘xc5 27 ♖xd5 ♘e6 28 ♖b1 a6 29 h4 ♖c8 30 ♔d2 ♘c5 31 ♖e1+ ♔f8 32 h5 ♔g7 33 g4 ♘e6 34 ♖e4 ♔h6 35 f4 ♖g8 36 g5+ ♔xh5 37 g6+ ♔xg6 38 f5+ 1-0.

19 d6+ ♔e8 20 ♕xh6 ♕xb7 21 0-0-0 ♘f8 22 ♕f6 ♖c8 23 h4 ♕d7 24 ♗g2 ♕d8 25 ♕g7 ♕b6 26 ♕g8 ♖d8 27 d7+ ♖xd7 28 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 29 ♕xf7+

Kamsky resigned a few moves later, but I don't remember exactly how it went. When I showed this game to Bagirov he made some interesting suggestions, and then Tal joined us and we discovered yet more. For example we looked at the position arising after 16 0-0-0!? exd5 17 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♕xd5 ♖d8 and concluded that it was playable for Black.

So this was my first acquaintance with the Botvinnik variation, but at that time I had no idea that one day I would start playing it with the black pieces. However, after analysing it for White and getting more into contact with Shabalov, I was becoming more and more excited by the variation and eventually I decided to adopt it with both colours. In 1988 I was prepared to try it with Black in the World Cadet Championship and before that event I even had the chance to discuss it with Mikhail Moiseyevic Botvinnik himself. To be honest this was interesting only from a historical point of view – Botvinnik was insisting that the line 12...♕b6 (instead of 12...c5) 13 ♗g2 0-0-0 14 0-0 ♘e5 was the best option for Black. To me it was clear that after 15 dxe5 ♖xd1 16 ♖axd1 White stands better, but convincing the Soviet patriarch of something was always impossible. Recent tournament practice has proved that both 16 ♖axd1 and 16 ♖fxd1 yield White a clear advantage.

In 1988 I didn't get the chance to experience the Botvinnik variation (I would prefer to discount the game Sadler-Shirov in Timisoara, where White continued 7 ♕c2 after 5...dxc4 6 e4 b5) but the following year I was finally able to enter this adventurous opening.

Ubilava – Shirov

USSR Championship Semi-Final, Daugavpils 1989

These annotations were made in November 1989 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga.*

1 c4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 a4 ♗b4 8 e5 h6 9 ♗h4

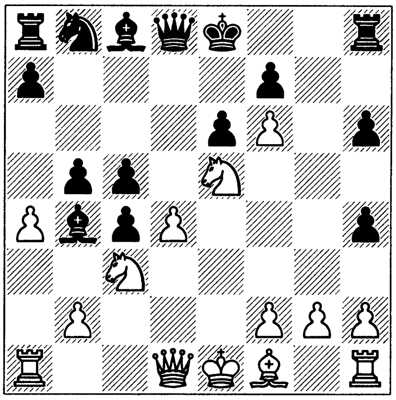
9 exf6 hxg5 10 fxg7 ♖g8 11 g3 is more promising.

[AS – Recent tournament practice has demonstrated that 11 h4 (instead of 11 g3) 11...g4 12 ♘e5 ♖xg7 13 h5 is probably White's best try. In fact this position looks too risky for Black, but of course 7...♗b4 is not obligatory.]

9...g5 10 exf6?!

Theory considers 10 ♘xg5 to be best here. Ubilava was hoping to transpose into the well-known variation 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 exf6 gxh4 10 ♘e5 ♕xf6 11 a4 ♗b4, but he runs into a strong rejoinder.

10...gxh4 11 ♘e5 c5! *(D)*



12 ♕h5?

The decisive mistake. After 12 ♕f3 ♕xd4 *[AS – 12...cxd4 13 0-0-0! is rather unclear, for example 13...♕c7 14 ♘xb5 ♕xe5 and now not 15 ♕xa8? d3!, when Black is better, but 15 ♗xc4! with an open fight. I should also mention that 12 dxc5? ♕xf6 13 ♕e2 fails to 13...♘d7!]* 13 ♘c6! ♘xc6 (13...♕d5? 14 ♘xb4 ♕xf3 15 gxf3 cxb4 16 ♘xb5 is better for White; while 13...♗xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♕d5 15 axb5 is also dangerous for Black) 14 ♕xc6+ ♔f8 15 ♖d1 ♗xc3+ 16 bxc3 ♕xc3+ 17 ♖d2 Black has only a perpetual check: 17...♕a1+ 18 ♖d1 (18 ♔e2 ♕e5+) 18...♕c3+ 19 ♖d2.

12...♕xf6 13 0-0-0 a6!

Now I don't see any compensation for the two pawns.

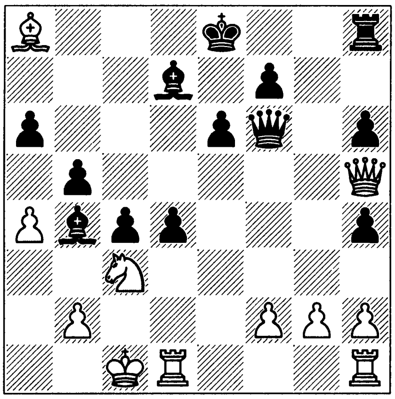
14 ♗e2

[AS – 14 dxc5 also seem to be losing for White in view of 14...♗xc3 15 bxc3 ♘d7 16 ♕f3 ♕xf3 17 ♘xf3 ♘xc5 and Black is winning.]

14...♘d7 15 ♗f3

15 ♕f3 can be met by 15...♕xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♘xe5 17 ♗xa8 (or 17 dxe5 ♖b8) 17...♘d3+, with advantage to Black.

15...cxd4! 16 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 17 ♗xa8



17...♗xc3!

Of course, 17...dxc3 is also quite good, but after 18 ♕e2 White can still offer some resistance. But now on 18 ♕e2 Black has the unpleasant 18...d3.

18 bxc3 d3 19 ♖xd3

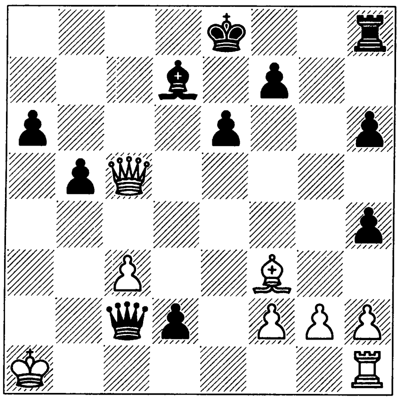
After using up nearly all of his remaining time, White was unable to find anything better. 19 ♔b2 is met by the decisive 19...b4 20 ♖c1 ♕xf2+ 21 ♔b1 b3, and otherwise there is no defence against the threat 19...♕xc3+, 20...♕b3+ and 21...c3.

19...cxd3 20 ♕c5 ♕f4+ 21 ♔b2 ♕xa4 22 ♗f3

White cannot save the game by 22 ♗c6 ♕c2+ 23 ♔a1 ♗xc6 24 ♕xc6+ ♔f8 25 ♕c5+ ♔g8 and Black has an overwhelming advantage.

22...♕c2+ 23 ♔a1 d2

W



24 ♖b1?!

A slightly tougher defence was offered by 24 ♖d1, after which I was intending 24...♖g8! 25 ♕d4 ♕c1+ 26 ♔a2 e5! 27 ♕xd2 ♗e6+ 28 ♗d5 ♕xd2+ 29 ♖xd2 ♖xg2, when the ending is hopeless for White.

24...♖g8 25 ♕d4 ♖g5 26 ♖d1

If 26 ♗d1 Black again has the unpleasant manoeuvre 26...♕c1 27 ♔a2 e5! winning.

26...♖d5 0-1

White lost on time, but in any case his position was hopeless.

As I have said before, at that time I wanted to play the Botvinnik variation with either colour, but somehow it was not popular and nobody really wanted to go in for it. (Of course, the Semi-Slav was not my only opening against 1 d4 – I was playing the King's Indian as well.) I had a lot of exciting games in the Meran system (in which White plays 5 e3 instead of 5 ♗g5), but I wanted another kind of blood! Shabalov and I did not ignore the fashion for the Meran system and in 1991 we started working on a crazy line (of course, I mean the variation 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♕c2 ♗d6 7 g4!?) which later became known in Russia as the 'Shabalov-Shirov Gambit'. However, at the beginning of our investigations I felt quite sceptical about it, so it was no wonder that when I had the choice in August 1991 I still went for the Botvinnik variation with White.

Shirov – Stisis

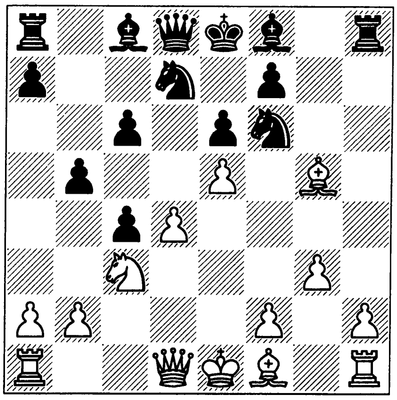
London 1991

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c6 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 g3

When this game was played I considered this move to be more precise than 11 exf6, which allows the lines 11...♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♗h6, which we have already seen and will see again later in this book, and 13...♘xf6.

B



11...♖g8!?

Not a pleasant surprise. I knew that this move was not so bad as considered by the theory of those times, but I had never studied it seriously before this game. A few months later I suggested to Kramnik that the line was worth a try and he started working on it as well. In Linares 1993 he played 11...♖g8 against Beliavsky and won.

12 h4

The most ambitious and critical continuation. The line 12 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 13 exf6 ♕xf6 14 ♗g2 ♗b7 is equal according to theory.

12...♖xg5 13 hxg5 ♘d5 14 g6 fxg6 15 ♕g4 ♕e7

So far everything seems forced. Moves like 15...♕a5 have been severely punished in the past.

16 ♕xg6+

At that time I didn't consider any alternatives to capturing the pawn. Both 16 ♗g2 and 16 ♖h8 later came into vogue and the reader also will see them in this book.

16...♕f7 17 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 18 ♗g2

Here my knowledge ended. I wasn't sure whether White was really better but still felt optimistic.

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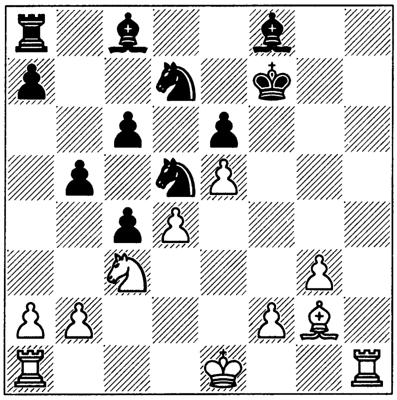


18...♘xc3!

A novelty at that time. Other moves are clearly worse.

19 bxc3

19 ♗xc6 ♖b8 20 bxc3 would ultimately lead to the same thing.

19...♖b8!

This is the idea. Black wants to play ...c6-c5 as soon as possible and he is not afraid of losing the c6 pawn – it is more important to exchange the light-squared bishops.

20 ♗xc6?!

Natural but not the best. 20 f4, first played by Bareyev against San Segundo (Madrid 1995), is much more ambitious. (Another important game with this move is Mecking-San Segundo, Linares (open) 1995.)

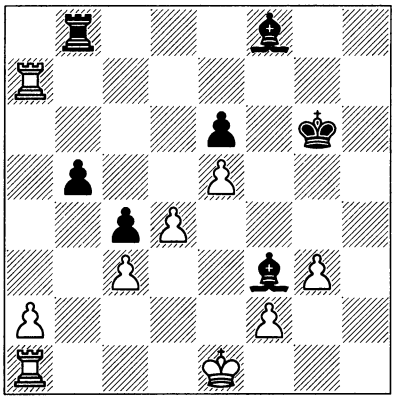
20...♗b7 21 ♖h7+

I still didn't smell any danger as I thought that a rook and two pawns would in the end be stronger than two active bishops. In any case I didn't like 21 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 at all, since as soon as Black gets his knight to d5 his position will be extremely pleasant.

21...♔g6 22 ♖xd7 ♗xc6 23 ♖xa7 ♗f3!

This came as a shock. I was mainly counting on 23...b4 24 ♔d2 bxc3+ 25 ♔xc3 ♗d5 26 ♖a4, with a slight pull, whereas after 23...♗f3 it becomes clear that White is in danger. He is practically forced to move his king away since Black threatens 24...♗h6, 25...♗g5 and 26...♖h8.

W



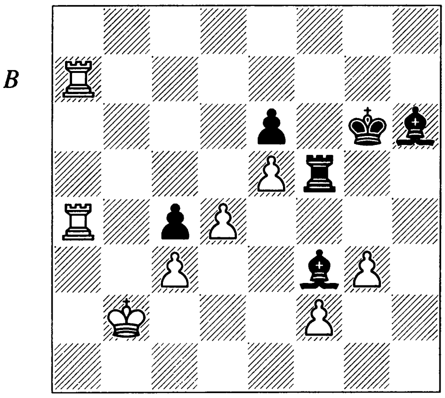
24 ♔d2?!

However, 24 ♖a6! ♔f5 25 ♔d2 was more precise, when Black is only slightly better. Now Black seizes a clear advantage.

24...♗h6+ 25 ♔c2 ♖f8! 26 ♔b2 ♖f5?!

This appears to be a bit too slow. Correct would have been 26...♗d2! 27 ♔c2 (27 a3 ♗d5) 27...♗g5 with the idea of 28...♖h8.

27 a4 bxa4 28 ♖1xa4



28...♗d5?!

After the game my opponent admitted that at this point he was still playing for a win. In my opinion, by now White is not worse and Black should have preferred 28...♗c6! 29 f4 (or 29 ♖xc4 ♖xf2+ 30 ♔a1 ♖f1+ 31 ♔b2 ♗c1+ 32 ♔b3 ♗d5 33 ♖d7) 29...♗xa4 30 ♖xa4 ♖h5 31 ♖xc4 ♖h2+ 32 ♔b3 ♖g2 and the game is drawn.

29 f4 ♖h5 30 ♖4a6! ♖h2+

Black couldn't prevent the white king from escaping, since 30...♗f8? would have failed to 31 g4 ♖h2+ 32 ♔c1.

31 ♔a3 ♖c2?

Probably the decisive mistake. Black could still have reached a draw by playing 31...♗f8+ 32 ♖d6 (32 ♔a4 ♖a2+ 33 ♔b5 ♖b2+ 34 ♔a5 ♖b3 35 f5+ ♔xf5 36 ♖f7+ ♔e4 37 ♖xf8 ♖xc3 38 ♖f4+ ♔d3 can only be dangerous for White) 32...♖h8! 33 ♔b4 ♔f5.

32 ♔b4 ♗f8+ 33 ♖d6!

Simple and powerful. If Black takes the rook he won't be able to stop the pawn, but otherwise he will soon lose his bishop since White threatens 34 f5+. The rest is agony.

33...♖b2+ 34 ♔c5 ♖b8 35 g4! ♖c8+ 36 ♔b5 ♗xd6 37 exd6 ♗f3 38 g5 ♗d5 39 d7 ♖d8 40 ♔c5 ♗e4 41 ♔d6 ♔f7 42 ♖c7 ♗f5 43 g6+ 1-0

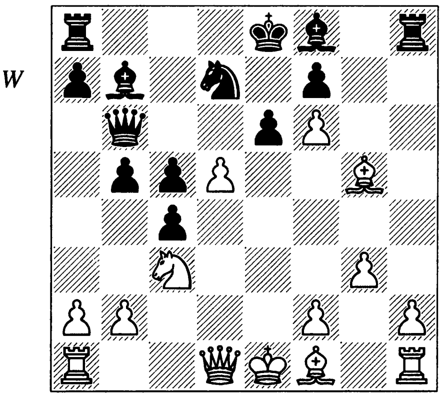
Although I won this game I wasn't very happy about the opening, because my much lower-rated opponent has equalized relatively easily. And for a while I turned more to investigating the Meran system (see Game 36, Shirov-Thorhallsson, in this book). My Botvinnik 'comeback' came more than a year later, in 1992.

Shirov – Oll

Tilburg (rapidplay) 1992

This was the second rapid play-off game in a knock-out match. An exciting tournament situation – but the game itself is practically not worth annotating. Lembit Oll, who is generally a great expert in opening theory, couldn't stand the tension and played carelessly quickly at the most critical moment.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 c6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♕b6



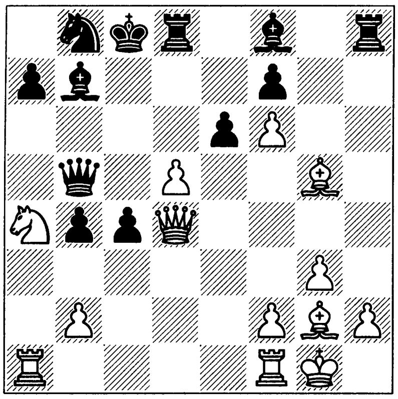
Undoubtedly the most complex branch of the Botvinnik variation, and the one that most players have focused their attention on.

14 ♗g2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 16 ♘a4 ♕b5

In 1992 the move 16...♕a6 hadn't yet been seen.

17 a3 ♘b8 18 axb4 cxb4 19 ♕d4!?

I had analysed 19 ♕g4 a lot over the years, but when this game was played I wasn't convinced that it led to an advantage for White (today theory claims that White is better in that line). On the other hand 19 ♕d4 had just been introduced into practice in the correspondence game Krausser-Gunther shortly before the present encounter.



19...♖xd5

This was condemned by several commentators, but what else can Black do? 19...♘c6 20 dxc6! ♖xd4 21 cxb7+ seems to lose by force, as in the games Krausser-Gunter, Salov-Illescas, Madrid 1993, and Kamsky-Kramnik, New York 1994!

20 ♕xa7 ♘c6??

This is horrible. The only way to proceed was 20...♘d7, after which it is still not easy for White to prove his advantage.

21 ♘b6+

Winning. The rest needs no comment.

21...♔c7 22 ♗f4+ ♗d6 23 ♘xd5+ exd5 24 ♗xd6+ ♔xd6 25 ♕e3 ♔c7 26 ♖fe1 ♖d8 27 b3 d4 28 ♕f4+ ♔b6 29 ♖e7 1-0

By the end of 1992 I was again ready to employ the Botvinnik system with both colours and of course I started studying it more. The next chance came quite soon afterwards, in January 1993 at Wijk aan Zee.

Nikolić – Shirov

Wijk aan Zee 1993

These annotations were made in January 1993 and first appeared in the German magazine *Schach 64*.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 g3 ♗b7

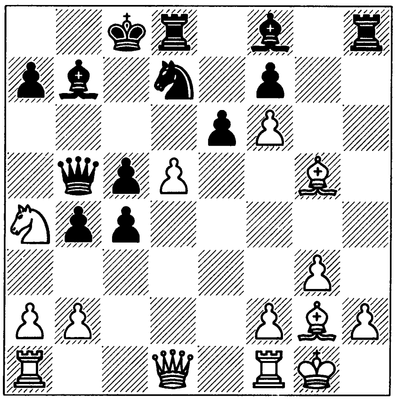
Diverging with 11...♖g8 12 ♗h4! didn't work out well for Black in Magerramov-Savchenko, Helsinki Open 1992.

[AS – In 1993 (Rostov on Don) there was another game between Magerramov and Savchenko and this time Black won. According to that game 12 ♗h4 is not very convincing.]

12 ♗g2 ♕b6 13 exf6 0-0-0 14 0-0 c5 15 d5

15 dxc5 is possible, as in the game Timman-Tal, Hilversum 1988. However, after 15...♘xc5 16 ♕e2 ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 ♗h6 I quite like Black's position.

15...b4 16 ♘a4 ♕b5



17 dxe6

In the game I. Sokolov-Oll on the next board White started his queenside play immediately with 17 a3, which looks even better to me than 17 dxe6.

[AS – The point was that the evening before Oll and I prepared together to meet the Bosnian grandmasters. Oll's game more or less showed the fruits of our labour, as he quickly obtained a good position. He just needed a draw to win the match (Wijk aan Zee was also based on a knock-out system) but again at the decisive moment he played too quickly, missed some tactics and lost.

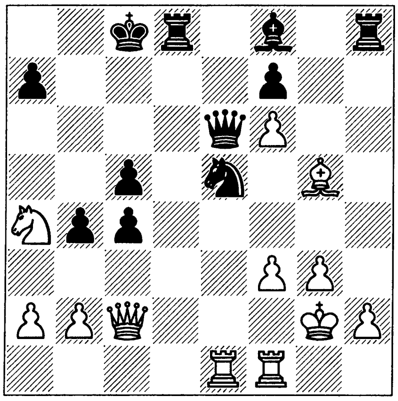
The first game of my match against Nikolić had ended in a draw, so my situation *was different. Perhaps this helped me to win, who knows ...]*

17...♗xg2 18 ♔xg2 ♕c6+

Black now picks up the pawn on e6. In the game Aseyev-Bagirov, Helsinki Open 1992, White short-circuited himself here with 19 ♕f3?? (intending 19...♕xe6 20 ♕a8+) 19...♖h2+, winning the queen.

19 f3 ♕xe6 20 ♕c2 ♘e5 21 ♖ae1

B



21...♖d4!?

Tal and Shabalov had discovered this move as long ago as 1983, but it wasn't tried out in practice until nine years later, in the game Bareyev-Oll, Moscow Speed Tournament 1992. *[AS – Here I should mention that as the representative of Estonia, which is a neighbour to Latvia, Lembit Oll has always had close chess contact with Shabalov and I.]* Belyavsky-Piket, Amsterdam 1989, went 21...♕h3+ 22 ♔g1 ♘d3 23 ♖e2 ♗d6 24 ♕xc4 ♗xg3. White then had the choice between perpetual check with 25 ♕a6+ (and ♕b5+, ♕c6+, etc.) and the game continuation 25 ♕g4+ ♕xg4 26 fxg4, with complicated play.

22 h4 ♗d6 23 a3

This is the first new move of the game, but it doesn't even guarantee White equal play. Other tries are:

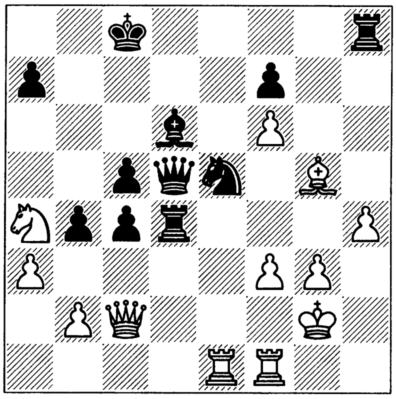
a) 23 ♗e3? occurred in Rublevsky-Savchenko, Helsinki Open 1992, but it backfired after 23...♖dxh4! 24 gxh4 ♖xh4, when Black had a strong attack;

b) 23 ♖e4 was effectively punished in the already mentioned game Bareyev-Oll which continued 23...♕d5 24 ♕e2 ♘xf3! 25 ♖e8+ (or 25 ♔xf3 ♖e8) 25...♖xe8 26 ♕xe8+ ♔c7 and Black soon won. In my opinion the best continuation is

c) 23 ♖e2, with the possible sequel 23...♕d5 24 ♕f5+ ♔c7, and now both 25 ♗f4 ♖e8 and 25 ♖fe1!? ♘d3 26 ♖e7+ ♗xe7 27 ♖xe7+ ♔c6 28 ♕xd5+ ♖xd5 29 ♖xf7 lead to unclear play. If Black doesn't want to take any risks he can force perpetual check in the last variation with 29...♖e8 30 ♖xa7 (there is nothing better) 30...♖e2+ 31 ♔h3 ♘f2+, etc.

23...♕d5

W

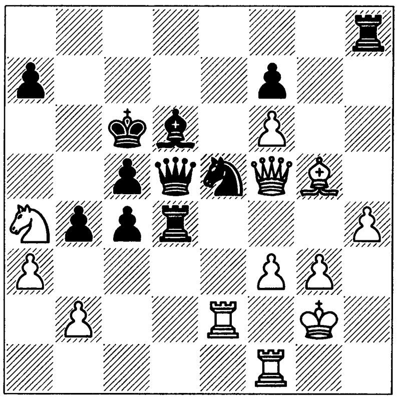


24 ♕f5+ ♔c7 25 ♖e2

Now 25 ♗e3? is bad due to 25...♘d3, and 25 ♗f4 is met by 25...♖xf4! 26 ♕xf4 ♘d3 27 ♖e7+ (27 ♕e4 ♘xe1+ 28 ♖xe1 ♔c6! is good for Black) 27...♔c6 28 ♕e4 ♖g8!! 29 g4 ♗xe7 30 fxe7 (not 30 ♕xe7? ♖xg4+ 31 ♔h3 ♖g8, threatening ...♘f4+) 30...♕xe4 31 fxe4 ♖xg4+ 32 ♔f3 (or 32 ♔h3 ♖xe4) 32...♖g8, when in view of the badly placed knight at a4 Black has the advantage.

25...♔c6!! *(D)*

Steinitz understood the value of the king as a strong piece, and in the present game Black's monarch will perform sterling work. Nonetheless when I made this move I couldn't help remembering the game Shirov-Georgiev, Biel 1992, in which my king didn't feel at all comfortable on h5, and indeed eventually came to grief there. On the present occasion, however,



my king's journey is crowned with success.

26 b3!

White stands badly from a strategic point of view, because of the badly placed knight on a4, but this doesn't mean that his attacking chances should be underestimated. Here, for example, capturing the pawn on b3 would be unfavourable for Black: 26...cxb3 27 axb4 cxb4 28 ♖c1+ ♘c4 (28...♔b5?? loses after 29 ♖c5+ ♗xc5 30 ♖xe5) 29 ♕b1!, and I didn't like the look of the storm brewing up on the queenside at all.

26...c3 27 axb4 cxb4 28 ♖a1!

After this Black must always reckon with a knight sacrifice on c3 followed by the combination ♖a6+, ♖xd6 and ♖xe5. For example, 28...♕xb3? 29 ♘xc3!, threatening 30 ♖a6+, 31 ♖xd6 and 32 ♕xe5+, or 28...♖d3? 29 ♘xc3! bxc3 30 ♖a6+ ♔c7 31 ♖xd6! ♔xd6 32 ♖xe5 (threatening 33 ♗f4) 32...♕xf3+ 33 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 34 ♖e7, and White doesn't stand worse.

28...♘d3 29 ♕xd5+ ♖xd5

I also examined continuing the king's advance with 29...♔xd5, when, for example, 30 ♗e3! ♖g8! favours Black. Correct is 30 ♔h3! ♖g8 with complicated play if White continues 31 ♖c2 and thereby avoids the lurking danger – 31 ♖aa2? ♖xg5! (removing the defender of c1) 32 hxg5 ♘c1. Black wins back the exchange, follows up with ...♖d2 and wins the ending against the helpless knight on a4.

30 ♖e4!

The best chance. White preserves the balance by tactical means.

30...♔b5

The king advances and clears the c-file, in preparation for ...♖c8 and later ...c3-c2. White's next is directed against this.

31 ♖c4! ♖e8!

During this phase of the game I continually had to calculate the possible rook sacrifice on c3. In this position it would fail to 32 ♖xc3 ♖e2+ 33 ♔f1 (not 33 ♔g1? ♗e5! or 33 ♔h3? ♘f2+ 34 ♔g2 ♘e4+) 33...♖f2+ 34 ♔g1 ♖xf3 with a clear advantage to Black.

32 ♖a2 ♘e1+

I thought this would lead to a won ending, but in the post-mortem we discovered that White has a study-like way to draw. So if Black is to demonstrate that he is winning he must look for another continuation here. The tries 32...♖de5? 33 ♖d4 and 32...♗e5 33 ♖e2 fail, but 32...♖ee5!? comes into consideration.

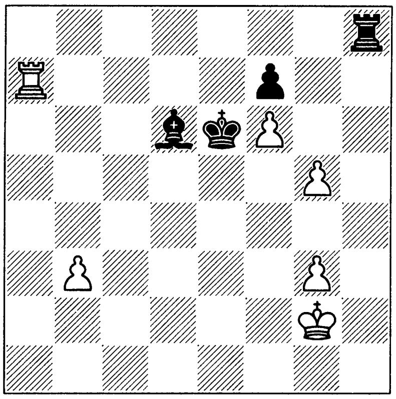
33 ♔h3 ♘xf3 34 ♖xc3!

Here the above-mentioned rook sacrifice is possible.

34...♘xg5+ 35 hxg5 ♖h8+

In my original calculations I thought I could win with 35...♖xg5 36 ♖d3 ♖xg3+ 37 ♖xg3 ♗xg3 38 ♔xg3 ♖e3+ 39 ♔f4 ♖xb3. Checking this later I noticed 40 ♘c5! ♔xc5 41 ♖xa7 drawing.

36 ♔g2 bxc3 37 ♘xc3+ ♔c6 38 ♘xd5 ♔xd5 39 ♖xa7 ♔e6



40 ♖a4??

With his last move before the time control, Nikolić throws away the draw he has almost achieved and which can be reached, as Ivan Sokolov pointed out in the post-mortem, by 40 ♔f3! ♖h3 41 ♔g4 ♖xg3+ 42 ♔h5 ♖h3+ (42...♔f5 43 ♖a5+ ♗e5 44 ♔h6! is also a draw) 43 ♔g4 ♖xb3 44 ♖a5! Black cannot improve his position. White answers ...♗e5 with lateral rook checks, and if the rooks are exchanged, for example after ...♖e3-e5, White draws with ♔h5 and g5-g6, eliminating the last black pawn.

40...♖g8 41 ♖g4

41 ♖a5 doesn't save White because his king is too far back and he is unable to play g5-g6 to get rid of the last black pawn: 41...♗e5 42 ♖a6+ ♔f5 43 ♖a7 ♔g6! followed by ...♖b8.

41...♗e5 0-1

Since ...♔f5 will be decisive.

In 1993 I again had a 'break' from the Botvinnik system with White, because I had found some new ideas in Meran with 7 g4 (which is actually no less exciting!) and later I won two games with it. However, the Botvinnik still remained one of my main weapons with Black. The next game was played two months later in the last round at Linares 1993, and it was very important from a sporting perspective – if I could win I would catch Karpov and Anand and lie behind only Kasparov.

Before the Linares tournament I had found out that the course of the Wijk aan Zee game between I. Sokolov and Oll was probably losing for Black (since confirmed by tournament practice), so I decided to switch to an already almost forgotten line, which as the reader will recall, I had analysed with Tal and Bagirov in 1987.

Yusupov – Shirov
Linares 1993

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♗h6

This move could hardly have surprised Yusupov, since he had played it himself against Bagirov as long ago as in 1981!

14 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 15 ♕d2

Bagirov continued 15 ♗g2, the main line at that time, but it doesn't yield White any advantage.

15...♕xf6 16 0-0-0

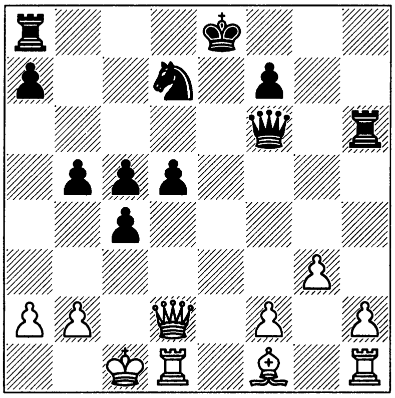
As the reader may recall, I continued 16 ♘e4 against Kamsky, but Yusupov follows a theoretical recommendation.

16...♗xd5

Following our old Latvian analysis. After the game Yusupov pointed out the move 16...♔f8!? and the new era of the 13...♗h6 line had begun.

17 ♘xd5 exd5

Here Yusupov sank into deep thought and I realized that Black's position was not at all as bright as it had seemed in 1987.



18 ♗g2

I was quite afraid of 18 ♕xd5 ♖d8 (18...♘b6 19 ♖e1+ ♔f8 20 ♕xc5+ ♔g8 21 ♕xb5!, intending ♕e5, which is slightly better for White) 19 f4, but the game Gofstein-Kacheishvili, played one year later in Groningen 1993, showed that this is probably not all that dangerous for Black. That game went 19...♘b6 20 ♖e1+ ♔f8 21 ♕xc5+ ♕d6 22 ♕xd6+ ♖hxd6 23 ♗e2 c3! 24 ♖d1 (24 bxc3? ♘a4 25 ♖d1 ♘xc3 26 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 gives Black a slight pull)

24...cxb2+, and now according to Kacheishvili Black could have made a draw with 25 ♔xb2 ♘a4+ 26 ♔b3 a6! 27 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 28 ♖c1 ♖h6! 29 ♖c2 ♖xh2 30 ♗g4 ♖xc2! 31 ♔xc2 b4! (intending ...♘c3).

18...♘b6 19 ♕e3+?

This is a serious mistake, after which White should already think about equality. Correct would have been 19 ♗xd5 0-0-0 (19...♖c8 20 ♗b7 ♖c7 21 ♗a6 is also better for White) 20 ♗b7+ ♔c7 21 ♕xd8+ ♕xd8 22 ♖xd8 ♔xd8 23 ♗a6, when the endgame is very dangerous for Black.

19...♔f8 20 ♕xc5+

Now 20 ♗xd5? would have been wrong in view of 20...♘a4! with an attack.

20...♔g8?!

This appears to be a serious mistake. There is just one difference between this move and 20...♔g7, but it seems to be a very important one. The reader will understand what I mean eighteen(!) moves later.

21 ♕d4

21 ♗xd5? loses to 21...♖h5.

21...♖e8!

Black takes over the initiative with this move. Even the exchange of queens doesn't stop him.

22 ♗xd5 ♕xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♖e2 24 ♗e4!

Here I too started thinking a lot. In principle, having been worse in the opening, I wouldn't have minded making a draw, which would have been the probable outcome after 23...♖xf2 24 ♖d2. But then I saw a tempting pawn sacrifice ... I should add that Karpov at that point had an inferior position against Bareyev, and Anand also faced slight problems against Salov.

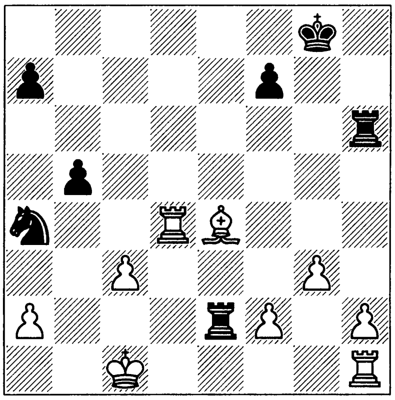
Anything could happen and, being just half a point short of Karpov and Anand, I smelled blood.

24...c3! 25 bxc3 ♘a4 *(D)*

A curious position! White has two pawns more, a bishop against a knight and it is his move. But he is just fighting for a draw!

26 ♗c2! ♘xc3 27 ♖d2 ♘xa2+ 28 ♔d1 ♘c3+ 29 ♔c1 ♖he6!?

W



29...♖e5!? 30 ♔b2 b4 would have been another winning try, but I wanted to avoid any possible risk.

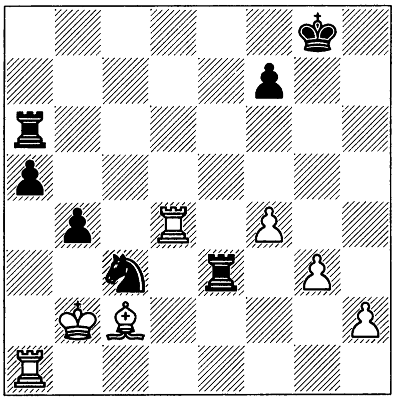
30 ♗d3 ♖2e5 31 ♔b2 b4 32 ♖a1 a5 33 ♗c2!

Despite his time-trouble Yusupov defends very well.

33...♖a6 34 f4 ♖e3 35 ♖d4!

White threatens 36 ♖xb4; I thought I could refute this plan but I had overlooked a trick.

B



35...♖e2! 36 ♖xb4 ♖c6! 37 ♖xa5! ♘d1+ 38 ♔c1

Here I understood what was going on.

38...♖cxc2+

38...♘e3 would have been met by 39 ♖g5+ ♔f8 40 ♖b8+ ♔e7 41 ♖e5+ ♔f6 42 ♖xe3 drawing. But with my king on g7 (see the notes to Black's 20th move), then 39 ♖g5+ ♔f6 would just be winning for Black.

39 ♔xd1

Now Black can't do anything.

39...♖ed2+ 40 ♔e1 ♖xh2 41 ♔d1 ♖cg2 42 ♖e4 ½-½

Here we agreed a draw, which meant that I finished fourth since Karpov and Anand had also drawn. Nevertheless, this was a great success for me.

I again had to wait a long time for my next opportunity to play the Botvinnik, because I had another pet line with Black (the Slav with 4...a6) and I was still employing the Meran with White. In October 1993, at the World Team Championship in Lucerne, I saw Kamsky defeat Kramnik in the variation 5 ♗g5 h6 (instead of 5...dxc4). A few days later I had Black against him and I suspected that he would feel confident in the Botvinnik with White. I didn't prepare much for the game, but I remembered Yusupov's suggestion in Linares and thought it would be great to try it.

The game appeared so impressive to other players that at Tilburg 1993, which started only two weeks after Lucerne had finished, the move 16...♔f8 occurred no less than three times!

Kamsky – Shirov

Lucerne (World Team Championship) 1993

These annotations are based on my notes in *Informator 57*.

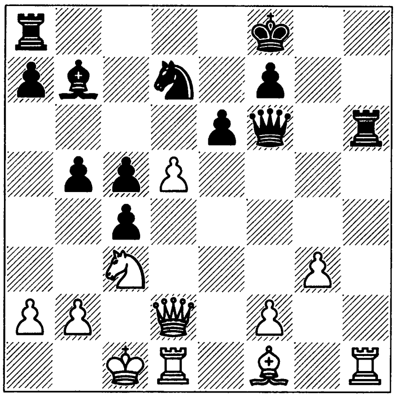
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♗h6 14 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 15 ♕d2 ♕xf6!

So again this position. It felt strange to play it against the same opponent after six and a half years but with the colours reversed. Like Yusupov, Kamsky didn't wish to try 16 ♘e4.

16 0-0-0 ♔f8!

A novelty which later on was recognized the best in *Informator 57*, though of course it belongs to Artur Yusupov. Black's idea is that either 17 dxe6 or 17 ♗g2 can be met by 17...♘e5.

W



17 f4

17 g4 was played in the game Piket-Kaidanov, Tilburg 1993, and Black was OK. Today the most critical continuation is 17 f3. One can find some games with this on a database.

17...♘b6! 18 ♗g2

18 ♘e4 ♕g7 worked out well for Black in the game E. Vladimirov-Bareev, Tilburg 1993. Perhaps 18 g4 was still worth trying.

18...exd5 19 ♕f2

White is already in severe difficulties. For example 19 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♖d8 21 ♕g2 c3 is practically lost for him, while 19 ♗xd5? ♖d8 20 ♕g2 ♘xd5 21 ♘xd5 ♕d6 is even worse. I had expected 19 ♘xb5, but after 19...♗c6 20 ♘c7 (20 ♕a5 d4 21 ♗xc6 ♕xc6; 20 ♘a3 ♖b8 (intending ...♘a4); and 20 ♘c3 d4 21 ♘e4 ♗xe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖e8 23 ♗g2 c3 are also very good for Black) 20...♖d8! Black is nearly winning, according to the course of the game B. Alterman-Kamsky, Tilburg 1993.

19...♖c8!

Accuracy is the most important thing now. Variations such as 19...d4?! 20 ♗xb7 ♖b8 21 ♘e4 ♕e7 22 f5! would have yielded White unnecessary counterplay.

20 ♘xb5?!

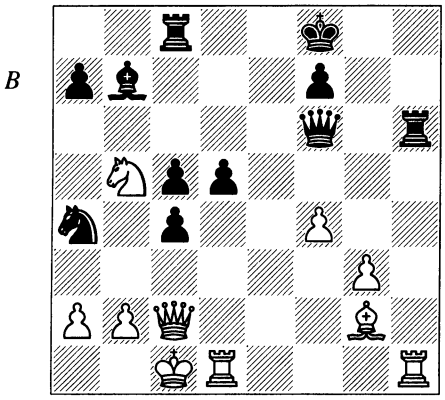
After this I consider White's position to be lost. After long thought Kamsky rejected both ways of capturing the d-pawn, and it's true that neither 20 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 21 ♘xd5 ♕a6, threatening 22...♕xa2 and 22...♖d6; nor 20 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 c3! with the idea of 22 b3 c4! 23 bxc4? c2! 24 ♕xc2 ♘xc4 offers White much hope; but probably his best chance was still 20 g4.

20...♘a4!

Threatening 21...c3.

21 ♕c2

Both 21 ♘a3 and 21 ♘xa7 would have been answered by 21...♖b8!, and the line 21 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♕c6 23 ♘xa7 ♕xd5 24 ♖d1 ♕b7 25 ♘xc8 ♕xc8 also appears hopeless for White.



21...♕a6! 22 ♘a3

I was also calculating 22 ♘c3 ♘xc3 23 ♕xc3 (or 23 bxc3 ♖b6 24 ♔d2 d4) 23...♕xa2 and decided that I was winning, for example 24 ♖xd5 (24 ♗xd5? ♗xd5 25 ♖xd5 ♕a1+ 26 ♔c2 ♕xh1; 24 ♕a3 ♕xa3 25 bxa3 ♖d8, intending ...♗c6, ...d5-d4) 24...♗xd5 25 ♗xd5 ♖b8! 26 g4 ♖b3 and the game is over.

22...c3!!

Perhaps the most difficult move in the game. Of course 22...♖b6?! would have allowed 23 ♕h7 with counterplay.

23 ♗xd5

This loses by force, though still demanding precise play from Black. 23 b3 would have been even worse because of 23...♘b2, but 23 bxc3 was an alternative. I was going to play 23...♕a5! 24 ♘b1 (24 ♘c4? ♕xc3 25 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♕a1+ 27 ♕b1 ♕xb1+ 28 ♔xb1 ♘c3+; 24 ♖d3 c4 25 ♖f3 d4 and 24 ♔d2 ♘b6 25 ♘b1 ♘c4+ both win for Black) 24...♖b8! (with the idea of ...♗a8, ...♖hb6) and it seems to me that there is no defence, for instance 25 ♗xd5 (if White continues 25 ♖he1 ♗a8! 26 ♖e3, intending to meet 26...♖hb6 with 27 ♘d2 and ♕h7, then the simplest is 26...d4! 27 cxd4 ♗xg2 28 ♕xg2 cxd4) 25...♗xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♖xb1+ 27 ♕xb1 ♕xc3+ 28 ♕c2 (28 ♔d1 ♕f3+) 28...♕a1+ 29 ♕b1 ♕xb1+ 30 ♔xb1 ♘c3+ and Black wins.

23...♘xb2 24 ♕f5

I had to see precisely the line 24 ♗xb7 ♕xa3! 25 ♕b3 (25 ♗xc8 ♘d3+ [25...♘c4+ 26 ♔b1 ♖b6+ 27 ♔a1 ♕b2+ 28 ♕xb2 cxb2+ 29 ♔b1 ♘a3 mate, as given by the Swiss IM Beat Züger is even more accurate] 26 ♔b1 ♖b6+ 27 ♔a1 ♖b2) 25...♕xb3 26 axb3 ♖c7 27 ♖d8+ ♔e7 28 ♖b8 ♖b6 29 ♔c2 c4! and Black wins.

24...♖f6 25 ♕h7

This time 25 ♗xb7 fails to 25...♘d3+! 26 ♕xd3 (26 ♔b1 ♕xb7+; 26 ♔c2 ♕a4+; 26 ♖xd3 ♕xa3+) 26...♕xa3+ 27 ♔c2 ♕b2 mate.

25...♕xa3!

The clearest way. However, 25...♘xd1 26 ♖e1! ♘e3! (26...♕xa3+? 27 ♔xd1) 27 ♕h8+ (27 ♖xe3? ♕xa3+ 28 ♔d1 c2+; 27 ♘c4? ♗xd5 28 ♖xe3 ♖h6) 27...♔e7 28 ♖xe3+ ♔d7! 29 ♕h3+ ♔d6 30 ♘c4+ ♔xd5 31 ♖xc3! ♔c6! 32 ♘e5+ ♔c7 33 ♖xc5+ ♔b8 34 ♘d7+ ♔a8 35 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 would also have won.

26 ♕h8+ ♔e7 27 ♖he1+

27 ♖de1+ doesn't change anything in view of 27...♔d7 28 ♕xf6 ♘d3+ 29 ♔c2 (29 ♔d1 ♕c1+ 30 ♔e2 ♕d2+ 31 ♔f3 ♗xd5+) 29...♕b2+ 30 ♔xd3 ♕d2+ 31 ♔c4 ♗xd5+ 32 ♔b5 ♕b2+ and White gets mated.

27...♔d7! *(D)*

It's bizarre that although White has no less than ten discovered checks with his bishop, they are all worthless because of 28...♘xd1+. The double checks don't help either.

28 ♕h3+

28 ♕xf6 just leads to mate after 28...♘d3+ 29 ♔c2 ♘b4+ 30 ♔b1 ♕b2 and

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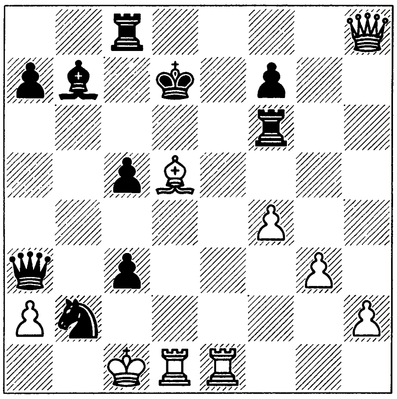


variations like 28 ♗c6+ ♔xc6 29 ♕xf6+ ♔b5 and 28 ♗e6+ ♔c6 29 ♗d7+ (29 ♗d5+ ♔b5) 29...♔c7 speak for themselves.

28...♔d6! 29 ♗xb7+ ♘xd1+ 30 ♔xd1 ♕xa2 31 ♕g2 ♕b1+ 0-1

Here Kamsky's flag fell, but of course he would have had to resign anyway because of 31...♕b1+ 32 ♔e2 ♖e8+. This game was awarded a special prize for the best game of the tournament and was obviously the golden moment for me in the Botvinnik variation. However, for a while I continued to employ it with success. The next game was played one month later, in the German Bundesliga.

Lobron – Shirov

Bundesliga 1993/94

These annotations were made in December 1993 and first appeared in the German magazine *Schach 64.*

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 g3

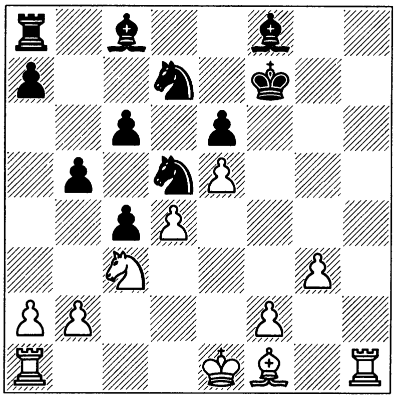
Less fashionable than 11 exf6 nowadays.

[AS – Nowadays 11 exf6 is still played more often.]

11...♖g8! 12 h4 ♖xg5 13 hxg5 ♘d5 14 g6 fxg6 15 ♕g4 ♕e7 16 ♕xg6+ ♕f7 17 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 (D)

The critical position of the line with 11...♖g8. Now White usually chooses between 18 ♗g2 and 18 0-0-0. Lobron's move came as a surprise.

W



[AS – The reader has already seen 18 ♗g2 in the game Shirov-Stisis. The next game will feature another critical position.]

18 ♘e4!? ♗b4+ 19 ♔e2

Another surprise. If White doesn't want to exchange knights, he can play 19 ♔d1 in order to meet 19...c3 with 20 b3.

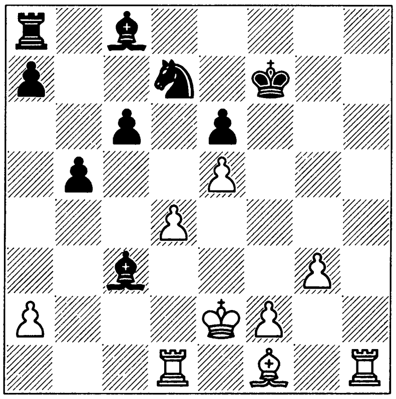
[AS – Probably the best answer to 19 ♔d1 is 19...c5.]

19...c3! 20 bxc3

Now 20 b3? fails to 20...♗a3!

20...♘xc3+ 21 ♘xc3 ♗xc3 22 ♖d1

B

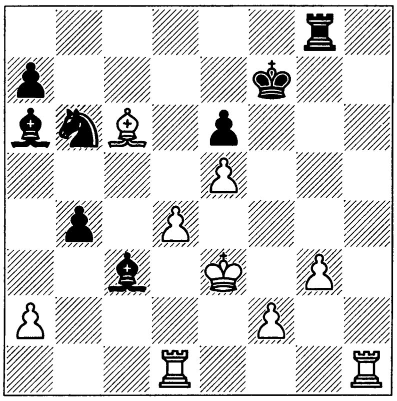


Here I saw what White had in mind. The attack with connected rooks is potentially very dangerous for Black, especially if White manages to realize the plan ♗g2-e4, f2-f4, g3-g4-g5, etc. So I was obliged to react forcefully before my opponent's pieces could become too active.

22...b4! 23 ♗g2 ♗a6+ 24 ♔e3 ♖g8!

Black must parry the threat of 25 ♖h7, so he doesn't mind exchanging a pair of rooks.

25 ♗xc6 ♘b6



The second critical position. White's pawns are weak, so the two extra pawns don't fully compensate for the advantage of two pieces against a rook.

26 ♖h6?

During the game I had the feeling that 26 ♖h7+ ♖g7 27 ♖h8 might have been a more accurate way to play. After some home analysis I would say that in the line with 27...♗c4 (I see nothing better) 28 ♖dh1 (a more precise move order for White is 27 ♖dh1 ♗c4 28 ♖h8) 28...♗xa2 29 ♖1h6 ♘d5+ 30 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 31 ♖c8! ♖g4 32 f3! ♖xg3 33 ♖f6+ ♔e7 (or 33...♔g7 34 ♖c7+ ♔h8 35 ♖f8+ ♖g8 36 ♖f6 ♖g3) 34 ♖c7+ ♔e8 35 ♖ff7! White is not in any danger of losing, although he has nothing better than a draw after 35...a5 (36 ♖h7 ♔d8 37 ♖hd7+, etc.).

26...♗c4 27 ♖dh1

After 27 ♖f6+ ♔g7 28 ♖h1 Black has 28...♖h8 with a clear plus.

27...♘d5+!

Of course 27...♗xa2? 28 ♖f6+ ♔g7 29 ♖h4 would only cause trouble for Black.

28 ♔e4?

This should have been the losing move. After 28 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 29 ♖f6+ ♔e8 30 ♖h7 ♖g4! 31 f3 (31 ♖ff7 ♖e4+ 32 ♔d3 ♖xd4+ 33 ♔e3 ♖e4+ 34 ♔d3 ♗xe5 seems hopeless) 31...♗xd4+ 32 ♔d3 ♗xe5 33 fxg4 ♗xf6 34 ♖xa7 ♗b2!, intending 25...♗a3, Black is also winning, but 29 ♖h7+! ♖g7 30 ♖1h6 (the same idea as in the variation 26 ♖h7!) 30...♗b2 31 ♔d3 would still have yielded White some drawing chances.

28...♗xa2 29 ♗d7 ♘c7 30 ♖f6+ ♔e7 31 ♗c6 b3 32 d5

The last try. 32 ♖h7+ ♔d8 33 ♖d7+ ♔c8 34 ♖ff7 ♗a5 is curtains.

32...exd5+

Here 32...b2 33 d6+ ♔d8 34 ♖f7 ♘d5 35 ♖d7+ ♔c8 36 ♖xa7 b1♕+ 37 ♖xb1 ♗xb1+ 38 ♔f3 ♖f8+ 39 ♔g4 (39 ♔g2 ♖xf2+ 40 ♔g1 ♖a2) 39...♗f5+ 40 ♔g5 ♖g8+ 41 ♔h6 ♘b6 with the idea 42 ♖c7+ ♔d8 43 ♖b7 ♗xe5 44 ♖xb6 ♗xd6 would also have been winning, but the text doesn't spoil anything.

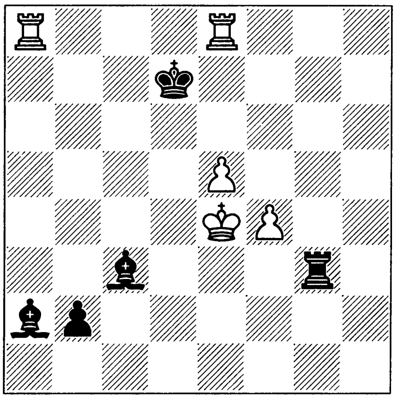
33 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 34 ♖a6!

At least this prevents the immediate ...b3-b2.

34...♘c7 35 ♖xa7 ♔d8 36 f4 ♖xg3??

Terrible. In time-trouble I forgot that after 36...♔c8 37 ♖h7 Black has 37...♗b1+, when the game is completely over.

37 ♖h8+ ♘e8 38 ♖a8+ ♔d7 39 ♖hxe8 b2



40 ♖ed8+??

White repays the compliment. Instead 40 ♖ad8+ ♔c6 41 ♖d6+! (I had overlooked this when playing 36...♖xg3, hoping only for 41 ♖c8+ ♔b5 42 ♖b8+ ♔a4) 41...♔b5 42 ♖b8+ ♔a5 43 ♖a8+ ♔b4 44 ♖b8+ leads to a draw, so the last chance for Black is to play 40...♔c7 41 ♖c8+ ♔b7

42 ♖b8+ ♔c6 43 ♖ec8+ ♔d7 44 ♖xc3 b1♕+ 45 ♖xb1 ♗xb1+ 46 ♔d4 ♖g1, and fight to obtain a rook and bishop against rook (without pawns) ending, though this is still a theoretical draw.

[AS – In fact there is no chance of Black winning White's pawns so it's a dead draw in every line.]

40...♔e7 41 ♖e8+ ♔f7 0-1

White resigned. After the game Lobron admitted that in time-trouble he had overlooked that 42 ♖f8+ ♔g7 43 ♖g8+ fails to 43...♗xg8.

[AS – A strange story of Black's light-squared bishop, whose power went unnoticed by both players.]

In 1994 I again switched with White from the Meran to the Botvinnik, as I had already had enough craziness with 7 g4. I had come to the conclusion that the course of the game Beliavsky-Kramnik was favourable for White, and although I overestimated White's chances a little, my ideas still worked in the following game, which was played in June 1994.

Shirov – Morović Fernandez

Las Palmas 1994

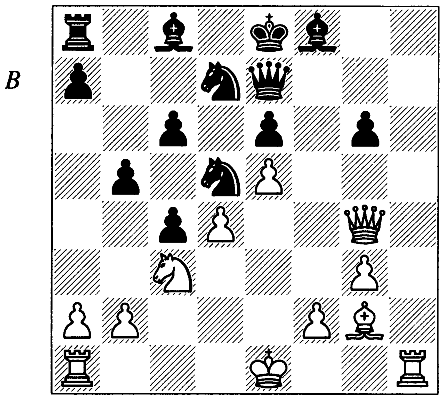
These annotations are based on my notes in *Informator 60*.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 g3 ♖g8 12 h4 ♖xg5 13 hxg5 ♘d5 14 g6 fxg6 15 ♕g4 ♕e7 16 ♗g2!? *(D)*

It has always been a priority of mine to try out my own ideas whenever I can. When the present game was played it was already known that Bareyev had established an advantage against San Segundo in the line 16 ♕xg6+ in Madrid 1994.

16...♕f7 17 ♗e4 ♘e7 18 ♘xb5!

This is the point. White wins the exchange and, although Kramnik had assessed the resulting position as unclear in his annotations, I trusted the white side.

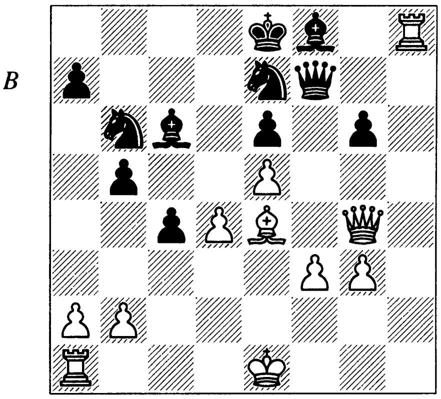


18...cxb5 19 ♗xa8 ♘b6 20 ♗e4 ♗d7!

Morović finds a stronger move than 20...♘bd5 (as suggested by Kramnik), which allows White to get the edge after 21 ♖h8!, intending f3, ♔f2, ♖ah1 etc.

21 ♖h8 ♗c6 22 f3!

Trying to avoid the exchange of bishops. The position after 22 ♗xc6+ ♘xc6 23 0-0-0 ♘d5 would have been perfectly okay for Black, I think.



22...♘bd5?

Now White can simply follow his plan. Black shouldn't have allowed 23 ♔f2 so easily. After 22...♔d7 23 ♔e2! (not 23 0-0-0 ♗g7, intending 24 ♗xc6+?! ♘xc6 25 d5? ♘xd5 26 ♖xd5+ ♔c7) 23...♗g7 24 ♖h7 ♘bd5 25 ♖ah1 White would only have been slightly better.

23 ♔f2

Now things are different. Black is already in serious trouble.

23...♘b4

Consistent but insufficient. However, even after the logical 23...♔d7 24 ♖ah1 ♗g7 25 ♖1h7 b4 26 ♕g5! White would also stand to win, for example

a) 26...c3 27 bxc3 ♘xc3 (27...bxc3 28 ♕c1!, intending ♕a3) 28 ♗xc6+ ♔xc6 29 ♖xg7 ♘e4+ (29...♕xg7 30 ♕f6 ♘f5 31 ♕xe6+ wins for White) 30 ♔g2 ♘xg5 31 ♖xf7 ♘xf7 32 ♖h7 and wins; or

b) 26...a5 27 ♔e1!!, and I don't see how to meet the threat of 28 ♗d5 ♗d5 (28...♘d5 29 ♕h6!) 29 ♖g7 ♕g7 30 ♕f6, winning.

24 a3!

No exchange of bishops! 24 ♖ah1?! ♗xe4 25 ♕xe4 ♘bd5 26 ♖1h7 ♕f5 would have suited Black in a way since he would have had some counterplay.

24...♘d3+

My idea was to answer 24...♗xe4 with 25 axb4! ♗f5 (forced) 26 ♕g5 ♘c8 (26...♕g7 27 ♖ah1; 26...♘c6 27 ♕f6! ♕xf6 28 exf6, intending ♖a6) 27 ♕h6! (threatening 28 ♖a6 or 28 ♖a5) 27...♔e7 28 ♕h4+ ♔d7 29 ♕f6! ♔e8 30 ♖a6! ♕xf6 31 exf6 ♔f7 32 ♖c6, winning.

25 ♗xd3 cxd3 26 ♖d1

Simple chess. White wins a pawn, after which the two rooks and two pawns will be clearly stronger than the three minor pieces.

26...♕f5

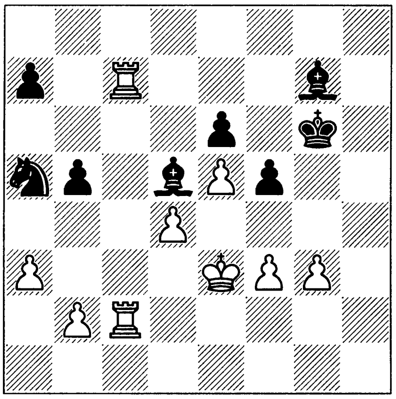
The exchange of queens only favours White, in any case it wasn't easy to avoid it, for instance 26...♘d5 27 ♖xd3 ♔d7 28 ♕h3! ♗e7 29 ♕h7 and 29...♕f5? is impossible because of 30 ♕g8.

27 ♕xf5 gxf5 28 ♖xd3 ♗d5 29 ♖c3 ♘c6 30 ♔e3 ♔f7 31 ♖h7+! ♗g7 32 ♖h2 ♔g6?!

Morović doesn't put up much resistance in the final stages. He had to play 32...♔e8 with the idea of 33 ♖hc2 ♔d7, but I think that after 33 g4! White should win quite quickly.

33 ♖hc2 ♘a5 34 ♖c7 *(D)*

Now it's curtains for Black.



34...a6

34...♗h6+ 35 f4 ♘c4+ 36 ♔e2 ♗e4 37 ♖c3 (37 ♖2xc4 bxc4 38 ♖xc4) 37...a5 38 ♖c5 would just prolong the game, not change the result.

35 ♖a7 ♘c4+ 36 ♔e2 a5 37 b3

Finally both rooks are coming in.

37...♘xa3

37...♘b6 38 ♖cc7 ♗h6 39 ♖a6 is the same.

38 ♖c8 ♗h6 39 ♖g8+ ♔h5 40 ♖h7 1-0

This game was a kind of 'Pyrrhic victory' for me since after this my results in the Botvinnik system worsened. But the reader will see that the opening was not always the reason.

In July 1994 I played a category 15 tournament in Pardubice (Czech Republic), and my last round opponent was Alexander Khalifman, who was having a disastrous tournament and had no special ambitions in the last round. A draw in some quiet opening would have sufficed to tie for first place, but for some reason I again chose the Botvinnik variation. The opening worked out well but then ...

Khalifman – Shirov

Pardubice 1994

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 61*.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 g3 ♖g8 12 h4 ♖xg5 13 hxg5 ♘d5 14 g6 fxg6 15 ♕g4 ♕e7 16 ♖h8?!

To be honest I had never seriously considered this move, and even now it doesn't seem very dangerous to me.

16...♘xc3 17 bxc3 ♕a3!

The most energetic continuation. Other tries would have been 17...♕f7, Kamsky-Serper, Groningen 1993, and 17...♗b7!?, Paschall-Wells, Hastings open 1993.

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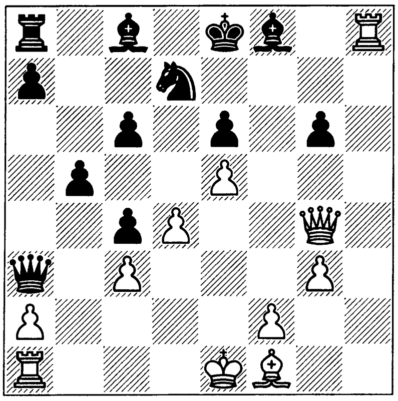


18 ♕xg6+

18 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 19 ♖d1 ♕xc3+ is probably also good for Black.

18...♔d8 19 ♖d1!?

This came as a surprise. In my home analysis I had concentrated on 19 ♕c2, and decided that after 19...♘b6 Black has a very good position.

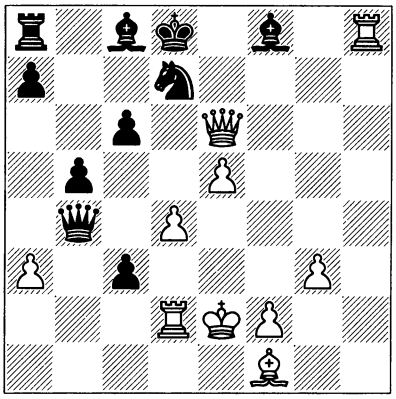
19...♕xc3+ 20 ♔e2 ♕b2+!?

Trying to get White's pieces onto bad squares. I didn't want to allow something like 20...♔c7 21 ♗g2 ♗b4 22 ♗e4, with good attacking chances.

21 ♖d2 ♕b4 22 ♕xe6 c3 23 a3! *(D)*

Probably best. 23 ♖c2 ♕xd4 24 ♗g2 ♗b7 looks nice for Black.

B



23...♕xa3??

I can hardly explain this move. I saw that after 23...♕b1! 24 ♕d6 ♕e4+ 25 ♔d1 ♕b1+ I could make a draw and share 1st-2nd places with Bareyev and I had plenty of time to think. The problem was that I had decided that my position was objectively better and that I should try to be the sole winner. A young man's ambitions ... Well, I can only add that the other attempt to play for a win 25...♕g4+ would also have been risky in view of the reply 26 ♖e2.

24 ♖c2!

This is better than 24 ♖a2 ♕b4.

24...♔c7 25 ♖h7!

I had overlooked this excellent move. The game is practically over now.

25...b4 26 ♖a2 b3!? 27 ♖xa3 c2 28 ♖a4! c1♕ 29 ♖c4 1-0

Here I resigned a Botvinnik variation for the first time in a serious tournament game.

My bad luck in this opening continued. In the next game, played one month later, I again reached an excellent position, and when my opponent offered a draw I had every reason to reject it.

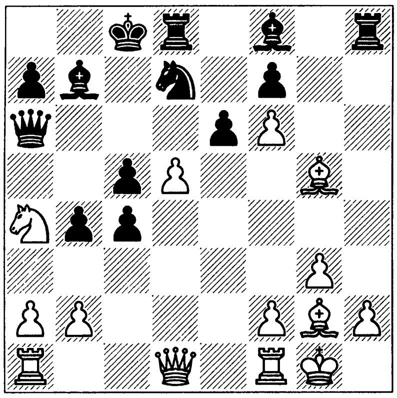
Ivanchuk – Shirov
Novgorod 1994

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 61*.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♕b6 14 ♗g2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 16 ♘a4 ♕a6!?

Switching from the usual 16...♕b5. At the end of 1993 Shabalov had told me that 16...♕a6 deserved attention, but at first I didn't take it very seriously. Then in the Summer 1994 we both visited Latvia at the same time, and before going back to the US he mentioned it again. I then did some analysis with some Latvian players (Bagirov and the talented young Fridman), but I still thought that this relatively new line was not really worth employing. However, in July 1994 I met Shabalov again at a tournament in North Bay (Canada), and we exchanged some more ideas. Now, it seemed quite interesting to me after all, but I practically had no time to check it – the Novgorod tournament began immediately after I returned from Canada.

W



17 a3

17 dxe6 ♕xe6 is also critical – see the next game.

17...♗xd5!

This is the move that Shabalov told me about. 17...b3, which had been played before, isn't a serious idea.

18 ♗xd5 ♘e5 19 axb4

The other possibility for White here is 19 ♘xc5!?

19...♖xd5 20 ♕e2 cxb4 21 ♘c3 ♕c6!

I like this exchange sacrifice more than 21...♖a5, which is now also well known.

22 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 23 f3 ♗c5+ 24 ♔g2 *(D)*

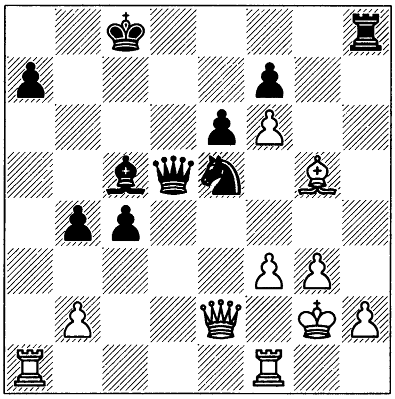
Another critical position could have arisen after 24 ♗e3 ♘d3 25 ♗xc5 ♕xc5+, when Black has counterplay for the exchange.

24...♘d3 25 h4 ♔b7

Black's idea is rather primitive, namely ...♔b6!?, ...a7-a5, and ...♗d4.

26 ♖a5!?

B



Lately there have been some games with 26 ♖fd1, but I cannot yet comment on it.

26...♕d4

26...♖d8!? would have been another try.

27 b3 ♗b6!

I didn't want to take a pawn – preferring to put mine on c3.

28 ♖a2 c3 29 ♖d1 ♖d8 30 h5

Somewhere around here Ivanchuk offered a draw, but since I had much more time than him and I considered my position a little better I thought I didn't have any losing chances ...

30...a5

30...♘f4+ 31 ♗xf4 ♕xd1 32 ♕xd1 ♖xd1 33 h6 a5 34 g4 would have led to exactly the same thing.

31 g4

31 h6 ♘f4+ 32 ♗xf4 ♕xd1 33 ♕xd1 ♖xd1 34 g4 is an alternative move order.

31...♘f4+ 32 ♗xf4 ♕xd1 33 ♕xd1 ♖xd1 34 h6 *(D)*

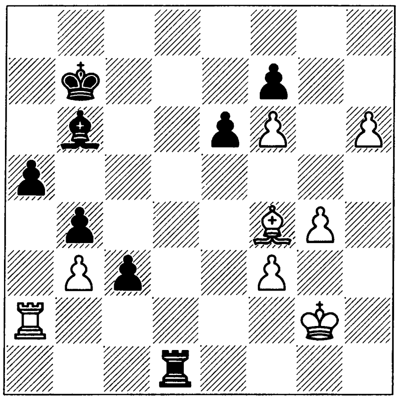
34...♔a6??

Terrible. I had completely overlooked White's 36th move. I saw that I could achieve a favourable pawn exchange after 34...e5! 35 h7 (forced, as 35 ♗xe5? ♖d2+ 36 ♔h3 ♖xa2 37 h7 c2 38 ♗f4 ♗c7! wins for Black) 35...♖d8 36 ♗xe5 ♖h8 but unfortunately the text seemed even more attractive to me ...

35 g5 ♖d8 36 ♔f1! ♗d4

Here I was already destroyed and now I didn't manage to offer any resistance.

37 ♔e2 e5



37...♖c8 38 ♔d3 e5 39 ♗c1 ♔b5 would have been the last chance.

38 ♗e3

White is winning now and the rest needs no commentary.

38...♔b5 39 h7 ♖h8 40 ♗xd4 exd4 41 g6 fxg6 42 f7 ♔c6 43 ♔d3 ♔d7 44 ♖e2 a4 45 ♖e8 axb3 46 ♖xh8 b2 47 ♖d8+ 1-0

After two such bitter losses it would have been easy to completely lose confidence in the Botvinnik variation. However, six months later I was due to play an eight-game match against Jeroen Piket, who also employs the Botvinnik with both colours, and I needed to adjust my preparation. However, the opening occurred just once in the match.

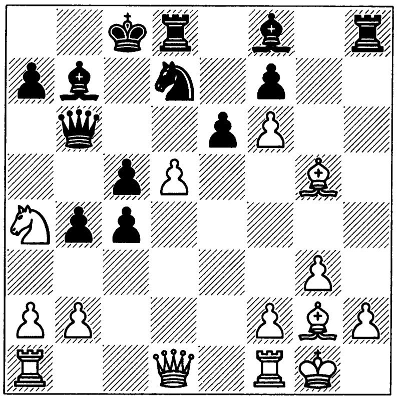
Shirov – Piket

Aruba 1995

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 63*.

Like yours truly, Jeroen has a great deal of experience in the Botvinnik variation with both colours. However, in the third game of our match he had avoided 5 ♗g5 as White, preferring 5 e3. Here was another chance ...

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♕b6 14 ♗g2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 16 ♘a4



16...♕d6

This move came as quite a shock to me. During the game I thought it must be a novelty.

17 dxe6

17 ♗f4 e5 18 ♗g5 ♗h6 didn't seem at all clear to me.

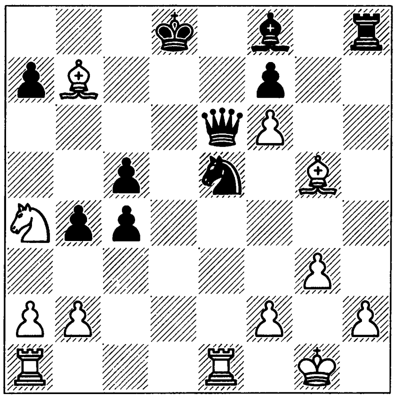
17...♕xe6 18 ♖e1 ♘e5!

In fact only this is the new move, but it is much better and more natural than 18...♕f5, as played in Agzamov-Gen. Timoschenko, USSR 1982.

19 ♕xd8+

I rejected 19 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 20 ♕xd8 because of 20...♘f3+ 21 ♔g2 ♕c6! 22 ♖e7+ ♗xe7 23 ♕xh8 (23 ♕xe7+ ♔a8 wins for Black) 23...♘xg5+, followed by 24...♗xf6 with a very strong attack for Black. Instead of 20 ♕xd8, 20 ♕e2 is correct, for example 20...♕h3 21 ♕xe5 ♕xh2+ 22 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 23 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 24 ♔f1 with a draw.

19...♔xd8 20 ♗xb7



20...♔c7??

During the game I considered both 20...♗d6 and 20...♕f5 to be better than the text, but now I am not so sure about 20...♗d6 because of 21 ♗f4! and now:

a) 21...♕h3 22 ♗xe5;

b) 21...♔c7 22 ♘xc5 ♕xf6 (22...♗xc5 23 ♖xe5) 23 ♗g2;

c) 21...♕xf6 22 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 23 ♖xe5 ♗xf2+ 24 ♔g2;

d) 21...♖e8 22 ♗xe5! ♗xe5 23 ♖ad1+ ♔c7 24 ♘xc5 ♕xf6 25 ♖d7+ ♔b6 26 ♘a4+ ♔b5 27 b3 and White wins in each variation.

However, 20...♕f5 saves Black's bacon since I see nothing better than:

a) 21 ♖ad1+ ♘d3 22 ♗f4 ♗d6! 23 ♗e4 ♕h3 24 ♖xd3 cxd3 25 ♗xd6 ♕xh2+ 26 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 27 ♗xh1 ♖xh1+ 28 ♔g2 ♖xe1 29 ♗f4 ♖e2 30 ♔f3 c4! is better for Black;

b) 21 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 22 ♖d1+ ♔c7 23 ♗f4 ♕xf4 24 gxf4 ♔xb7 25 ♖c1 ♖h6 26 ♖xc4 ♔c6 leads to an approximately equal ending.

21 ♗g2 ♕d7 22 ♗f4!

This may have been what Piket had missed.

22...♕xa4 23 ♗xe5+

Probably even better was 23 a3! ♗d6 (23...♕d7 24 axb4 wins for White) 24 axb4 ♕xb4 25 ♗xe5 and White's attack should prove decisive.

23...♔b6 24 ♖ad1

Now 24 a3 ♕d7 is less clear.

24...♖h5 25 ♖d8 ♖xe5

Black's last chance.

26 ♖xe5 c3 27 bxc3 bxc3 28 ♖b8+?!

28 ♗e4 was a lot easier.

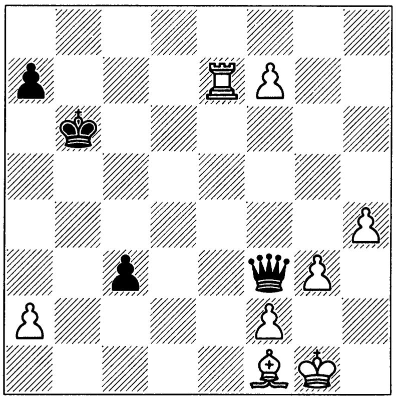
28...♔a5 29 ♖xf8 ♕d1+ 30 ♗f1 ♕d6 31 ♖fe8

Technically more precise was 31 ♖e7 c2 32 ♖xa7+ ♔b4 33 ♖fa8 c1♕ 34 ♖a4+ ♔c3 35 ♖c4+ ♔d2 36 ♖xc1 ♔xc1 37 ♖a4 ♔b2 38 ♖f4, winning.

31...c2 32 ♖e1 ♕d1 33 ♖8e7! ♔b6 34 h4 c1♕

Desperation, but Black cannot do anything.

35 ♖xd1 ♕xd1 36 ♖xf7 c4 37 ♖e7 c3 38 f7 ♕f3



39 ♖b7+!

The simplest.

39...♔c5

39...♕xb7 40 f8♕ c2 41 ♕b4+ ♔c7 42 ♕f4+ wins.

40 ♖c7+ ♔d6 41 ♗g2

Of course 41 ♖xc3 wins easily, but I didn't want to demonstrate any technique. Only after making my move did I spot Black's reply and my first reaction was one of horror. Fortunately for me Black still cannot save the game.

41...♕d1+ 42 ♔h2 ♔xc7 43 f8♕ c2 44 ♕f4+ ♔b6 45 ♗f3 1-0

If 45...♕b1 then 46 ♗e4.

For a long time I had expected Alexander Belyavsky to enter the Botvinnik variation with White against me, since he is a well-known expert on it. However four (!) times he chose other openings until he finally went for a real discussion in Ljubljana in December 1995.

Belyavsky – Shirov

Ljubljana (European Club Cup) 1995

The game was annotated in December 1995 but the present version appeared only in *ChessBase Magazine 51*.

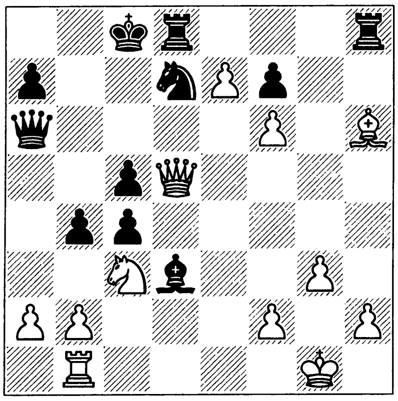
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♕b6 14 ♗g2 b4 15 0-0 0-0-0 16 ♖b1

Nowadays this move is considered more critical than 16 ♘a4.

16...♕a6 17 dxe6 ♗xg2 18 e7 ♗xf1 19 ♕d5 ♗h6 20 ♗xh6 ♗d3

Nothing new so far. But now Belyavsky plays an interesting novelty which might be a fruit of his homework.

W



21 ♘e4!?

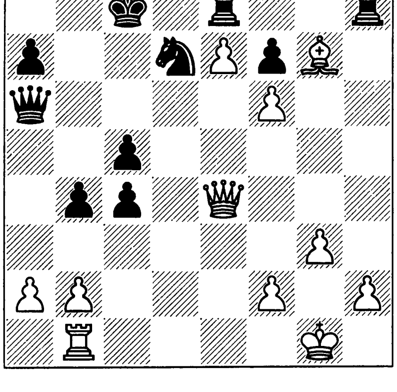
The known course is 21 ♕a8+ ♘b8 22 exd8♕+ ♖xd8 23 ♖e1 bxc3 24 ♗f4 ♕b6 (24...♕b7?? 25 ♖e7!! ♕xa8 26 ♖c7 mate) 25 bxc3 with a very complicated position (Yermolinsky-D. Gurevich, USA Championship 1994).

21...♗xe4 22 ♕xe4 ♖de8

I think that I had something like this analysed a long time before the game, and then I decided that with a rook more Black has nothing to worry about. However ...

23 ♗g7!

B



What is this? A rook down and then the bishop out of play? Unfortunately the e7 pawn compensates for everything.

23...♖h5

Another interesting try was 23...♘xf6!?

24 ♖d1 ♕b5!

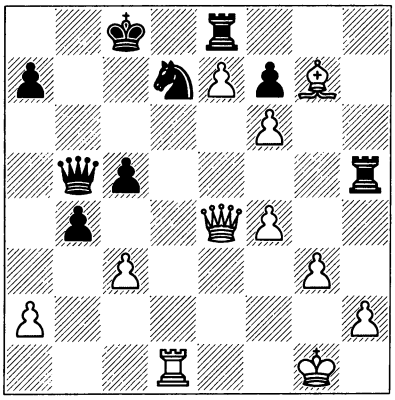
Probably the only move to prevent 25 ♕a8+ ♘b8 26 ♖d8+, since 24...♕a4? would have lost to 25 b3 cxb3 26 ♕a8+ ♘b8 27 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 28 exd8♕+ ♔xd8 29 ♕xb8+ ♔d7 30 ♕b7+ ♔e6 31 ♕e7+ ♔f5 32 ♕xf7.

25 f4?

I believe that most players would have gone for a move repetition after 25 ♕a8+ ♘b8 (25...♕b8? 26 ♕c6+ ♕c7 27 ♕a6+ ♔b8 28 ♕xc4 and White wins) 26 ♕e4 (26 ♕f3 ♖e5 27 h4) 26...♘d7, but it is well known that Beliavsky almost never goes in for them. In this case it seems that he was wrong. It is true that now the rook on h5 has no squares and is indefensible, but there is a trick that should turn things into Black's favour.

25...c3! 26 bxc3

B



26...c4??

Unbelievable. I saw that after 26...bxc3 27 ♖b1 I would have 27...c2!!, but for some mysterious reason I rejected it. White would have been in a hopeless situation, for example 28 ♖xb5 (after 28 ♕xc2 ♕c6 Black defends everything while an extra rook plus the position of the enemy bishop yields him an easy victory) 28...c1♕+ 29 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 30 ♔f3 ♕d1+ 31 ♔g2 ♕d5 and the game is over.

27 cxb4

Now White is not worse anymore. However, during the game I still thought differently, counting on my queen and rook which are now well connected. Due to this over-optimism I was unable to put up much resistance to the strong white pawns.

27...♔c7

My original idea of 27...♘b6 fails to 28 a4!! ♛xa4 29 ♜d8+ and neither:

a) 29...♔c7 30 ♜xe8 ♛d1+ (30...♛xe8 31 f5) 31 ♔g2 ♛d2+ 32 ♔f1 ♛d1+ 33 ♛e1; nor

b) 29...♜xd8 30 exd8♛+ ♔xd8 31 ♛e7+ ♔c8 32 ♛f8+ ♔b7 33 ♛xf7+ offer Black any chance of survival.

28 g4 ♜h3?

Probably the decisive mistake. 28...♜h4 was called for, when White must reply 29 ♛f3! (other tries are clearly unfavourable for White, for example 29 f5? ♘e5 30 h3 ♜xh3 31 ♜d5 ♜e3! 32 ♛xe3 ♛xd5 33 ♛xa7+ ♔d6 34 ♛b6+ ♘c6 35 b5 ♛d4+ 36 ♛xd4+ ♘xd4; or 29 ♛e2 ♛xb4) 29...♛b6+ (29...♛xb4 30 h3 yields White enough compensation for the rook) 30 ♔g2! (not 30 ♔h1? ♘xf6 31 f5 ♘xg4 32 ♛g3+ ♔c8 33 ♛xh4 ♘f2+ 34 ♔g2 ♘xd1 35 ♛xc4+ ♛c7 and Black wins) 30...♘xf6 31 g5 ♘g4 32 ♔g3! and Black has nothing better than 32...♜xh2 33 ♔xg4 ♛e6+ (after 33...♜xe7 34 ♛d5! White's chances are definitely not worse) 34 f5 ♛xe7, which seems to lead to a draw by repetition after 35 ♛f4+ ♔b7 36 ♛xh2 ♛e4+ 37 ♛f4 ♛g2+ 38 ♔h5 ♛e2+ 39 ♛g4 ♛h2+ 40 ♛h4 ♛e2+ 41 ♛g4.

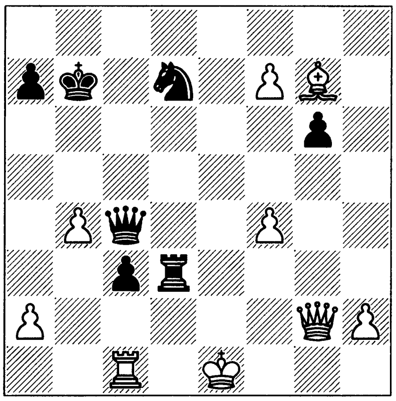
29 g5 ♜d3?! 30 ♜c1! c3 31 g6 fxg6 32 f7 ♜xe7 33 ♛xe7 ♛b6+ 34 ♔f1!

I had overlooked this. Now Black is dead.

34...♛b5

Neither 34...♛c6 35 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 36 ♝e5+ ♔b7 37 ♝xc3 ♛f3+ 38 ♔g1 ♛g4+ 39 ♔f2 ♛xf4+ 40 ♔e1 ♛c1+ 41 ♔e2; nor 34...♜f3+ 35 ♔g2 ♛c6 (35...♛f2+ 36 ♔h1) 36 ♝e5+ ♔b7 37 ♛d6 would have helped.

35 ♛e2 ♛c4 36 ♔e1 ♔b7 37 ♛g2+ *(D)*



It is strange that Belyavsky, who had almost twenty minutes to reach move forty, missed a simple win with the continuation 37 ♝xc3 ♛d5 38 ♔f2 g5 39 fxg5 ♛xf7+ 40 ♔g1.

37...♔c7 38 ♛e2 ♔b7 39 ♛g2+?? ♔c7

Now White must move his queen back to e2, otherwise the position will become very unclear.

40 ♛e2 ½-½

And here I claimed the three times repetition which arises after 40...♔b7. Possibly my best move in the game.

And finally the last and most bitter experience. Again I lost against Ivanchuk but this time without much fight ...

Ivanchuk – Shirov

Wijk aan Zee 1996

The game was annotated in February 1996 and published in *New In Chess*.

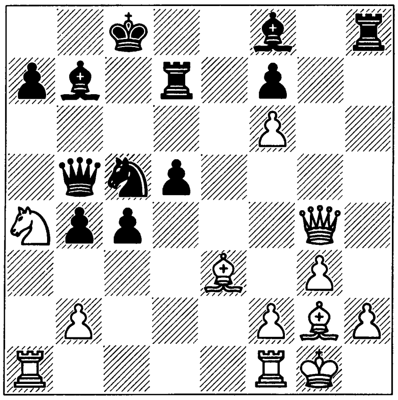
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♝g5 dxc4

For the second time I chose the Botvinnik variation against Vasily, and for the second time I lost. Time to draw some conclusions ...

6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♝h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♝xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♝b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♛b6 14 ♝g2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 16 ♘a4 ♛b5 17 a3 exd5

I hadn't played this move before and it seemed unexpected for Vasily. However, he reacted ingeniously.

18 axb4 cxb4 19 ♝e3 ♘c5 20 ♛g4+ ♜d7



Formally a new move but the idea of sacrificing the exchange was already known as 20...♔b8 is bad in view of 21 ♕d4! (Agzamov-Chandler, Belgrade 1982). I doubt that anyone would think twice about playing it.

21 ♕g7!!

A positional queen sacrifice, after which the attack of the white rooks and minor pieces becomes extremely strong. When the move appears on the board it looks so simple ... Vasily told me after the game he discovered 21 ♕g7 over the board. Impressive.

21 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 22 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 23 ♗h3 ♖hd8 24 ♕g7 ♔c7 25 ♗xd7 ♖xd7, with compensation, was what I had wanted.

21...♗xg7 22 fxg7 ♖g8 23 ♘xc5 d4

I was trying to overcome the difficulties with concrete play, but clearly underestimated White's 26th move. Other options seemed to me like a kind of 'slow death', for example: 23...♖c7 24 ♘xb7 ♖xb7 25 ♖fd1 ♖d7 26 ♗d4 (intending h4-h5-h6; 23...f5 24 ♖xa7! (24 ♘xd7?! ♕xd7 25 ♗d4 ♖xg7 is only a little better for White) 24...♖gxg7 (24...♖dxg7 25 ♖fa1) 25 ♖fa1; 23...♖xg7 24 ♗h3! ♗c6 25 ♖xa7; and 23...♗c6 24 ♖a6, intending 25 ♖fa1.

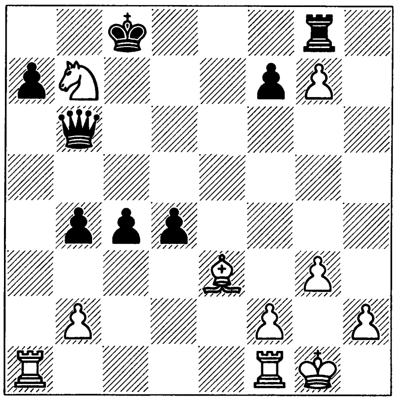
24 ♗xb7+ ♖xb7 25 ♘xb7 ♕b6 *(D)*

The only move. 25...♔xb7 26 ♗xd4 a5 27 ♖fe1 loses quickly.

26 ♗xd4!!

I was mainly counting on 26 ♗f4 ♔xb7 27 ♖fe1 a5!, with counterplay.

26...♕xd4 27 ♖fd1 ♕xb2



The choice wasn't a pleasant one. Variations like 27...♕xd1+ 28 ♖xd1 ♔xb7 29 ♖d4 ♖xg7 30 ♖xc4 a5 31 ♖f4! ♔b6 32 h4 ♔b5 33 b3; and; 27...♕xg7 28 ♖xa7 ♔b8 29 ♖da1 ♖e8 (29...♕d4 30 ♘a5!! ♕c5 31 ♖b7+ ♔c8 32 ♖xf7) 30 ♘d6 ♖e1+ 31 ♖xe1 ♔xa7 32 ♘xc4 speak for themselves.

28 ♘d6+ ♔b8 29 ♖db1 ♕xg7?

This loses immediately. Tougher resistance would have been promised by 29...♕d2 30 ♘xc4 ♕c3, but my home analysis indicates that White gets a decisive advantage by playing 31 ♖a4! (31 ♘e3 ♕c5 32 ♖a4 a5 33 ♖ba1 b3 is unclear) 31...b3 32 ♘a5! (32 ♘e3 ♔a8 33 ♖a3 ♕xg7 34 ♖axb3 is only slightly better for White) 32...♔a8 (32...b2 33 ♖b4+ ♔a8 34 ♖4xb2) 33 ♖a3! (33 ♖xb3 ♕e1+ 34 ♔g2 ♕d1! allows counterplay) 33...♕xg7 34 ♘c6 ♔b7 35 ♘xa7 and it's all over. I should also mention that I saw the line 29...♕c3 30 ♖xa7! ♔xa7 (30...♖xg7 31 ♖b7+ ♔a8 32 ♖7xb4) 31 ♘b5+ ♔a6 32 ♘xc3 bxc3 33 ♖b4! too late.

30 ♖xb4+ ♔c7 31 ♖a6!

Now Black must give up his rook to avoid being mated. Of course, further resistance is impossible.

31...♖b8 32 ♖xa7+ ♔xd6 33 ♖xb8 ♕g4 34 ♖d8+ ♔c6 35 ♖a1 1-0

And since the passed pawn is going to fall ... Black resigned.

P. S. Although 'the Botvinnik chapter' should have been completed with this game, new problems have since arisen. At Monaco 1996 I just couldn't resist trying it again – this time against Kramnik – and only a miracle saved me from another loss.

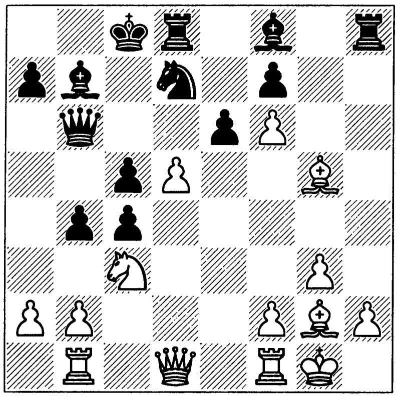
Kramnik – Shirov

Monaco (blindfold) 1996

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.

1 c4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 g3 ♗b7 12 ♗g2 ♕b6 13 exf6 0-0-0 14 0-0 c5 15 d5 b4 16 ♖b1

Somehow this move doesn't seem very logical to me – but it's terribly dangerous.



16...♕a6 17 dxe6 ♗xg2 18 e7 ♗xf1 19 ♔xf1

This move hasn't been seen in tournament praxis for a long time, but of course nobody could miss it in home analysis.

19...♕c6

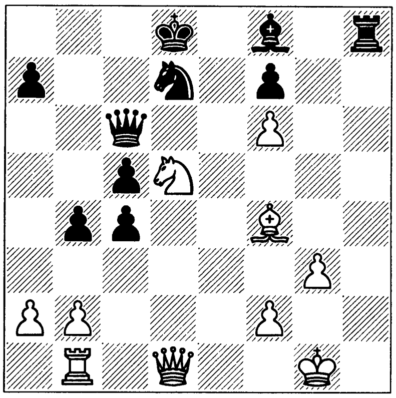
The only known example of 19 ♔xf1 was the game Uhlmann-Alexandria, Halle 1981, in which Black continued 19...bxc3 but that doesn't seem good.

20 exd8♕+ ♔xd8 21 ♘d5 ♖xh2 22 ♔g1 ♖h8 23 ♗f4! *(D)*

Avoiding the line 23 ♕f3 ♗d6, when the black bishop becomes rather active.

23...♗d6 24 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 25 ♕f3 ♘e5 26 ♕e4 ♖e8 27 ♘e3! ♘c6 28 ♕f3!

Very strong! Variations such as 28 ♕xc4 ♖xe3 29 fxe3 ♕xg3+; or 28 ♘xc4 ♕xg3+ 29 fxg3 ♖xe4 30 ♘d6 ♖e6 31 ♘xf7+ ♔e8 32 ♘g5 ♖xf6 33 ♘e4 ♖g6 are not especially dangerous for Black. Now he also has to look for an endgame, but a much less favourable one this time.



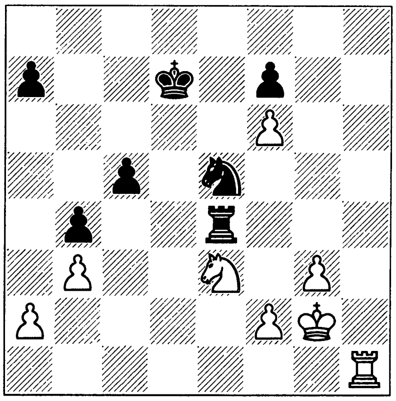
28...♔c7 29 ♘xc4 ♕d4 30 b3 ♕e4

After 30...♖e6 31 ♖d1 ♖xf6 (or 31...♕xf6 32 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 33 ♖d5 and White is clearly better) 32 ♖xd4 ♖xf3 33 ♖d5 White is on top.

31 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 32 ♔g2 ♘e5 33 ♘e3 ♔d7

The king was probably the last piece that Black should activate in this position. Now I would prefer 33...♘d7, although the text isn't a mistake.

34 ♖h1



34 ♖d1+ ♖d4 35 ♖xd4+ cxd4 is unclear.

34...♔e6?

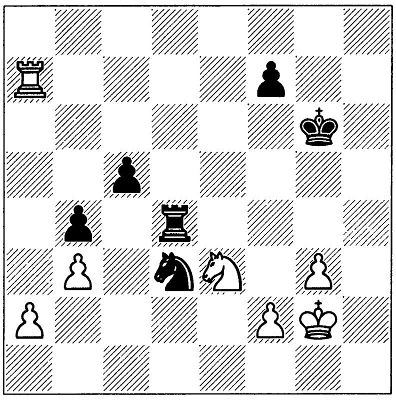
After this error Black can only hope for a miracle. Both 34...♖d4 and 34...c4!?

would have promised him some drawing chances.

35 ♖h8! ♔xf6 36 ♖c8 ♘d3 37 ♖a8 ♖d4 38 ♖xa7 ♔g6

38...♘c1 39 ♖a6+ is also bad.

W

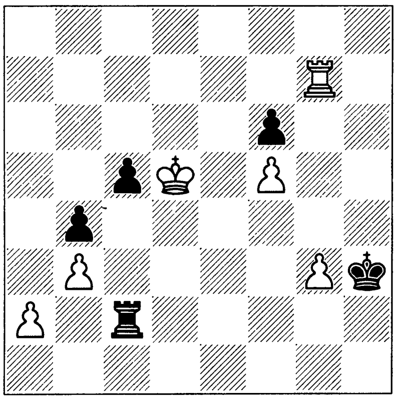


39 f4!

The rest of the game doesn't require much commentary. White is winning, but in blindfold (as well as rapid!) chess, there are always some practical chances – luck was with me on this occasion.

39...♘c1 40 ♘c4 f6 41 ♖a6! ♖e4 42 ♔f3 ♖e2 43 ♘e5+ ♔g7 44 ♖a7+ ♔h6 45 ♘d3! ♖c2 46 ♘xc1 ♖xc1 47 ♔e4 ♔g6 48 f5+ ♔h5 49 ♖h7+ ♔g4 50 ♖g7+ ♔h3 51 ♔d5 ♖c2

W



52 ♖g6??

A terrible mistake. The simplest way to win would have been 52 ♖c7 ♖xa2 53 ♖xc5 ♔xg3 54 ♔c4.

52...♖xa2 53 ♖xf6 ♖b2 54 ♖h6+ ♔xg3 55 f6 ♖xb3 56 ♖g6+ ♔h4 57 f7 ♖f3 58 ♔e6 b3 59 ♖f6 ½-½

Drawn because of 59...♖xf6+ 60 ♔xf6 b2 61 g8♕ b1♕ 62 ♕xc5. Immediately after the game I felt extremely pessimistic about the Botvinnik variation, but time passed and I discovered some new wrinkles. Time will tell whether it's still playable, but in my next (and for the moment last) try, I didn't have any 'opening' problems.

Azmaiparashvili – Shirov

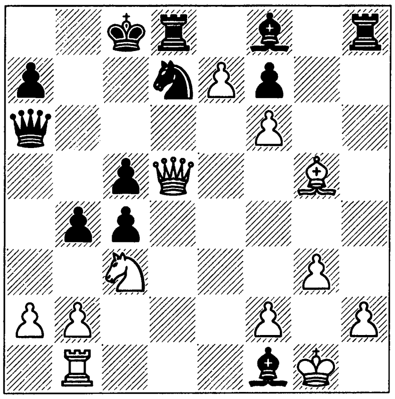
Madrid 1996

The game was annotated in May 1996, and published in various magazines.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♗b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♕b6 14 ♗g2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 16 ♖b1 ♕a6 17 dxe6 ♗xg2 18 e7 ♗xf1 19 ♕d5

This move, which was once considered practically the refutation of the 13...♕b6 line, in fact seems to lead to a draw according to the present game. Of course, 19 ♔xf1 causes Black more suffering. Funnily enough Kramnik went in for this position with Black(!) against Kamsky at Dos Hermanas 1996, but he also came very close to losing.

B



19...♗h6

19...♗xe7 20 fxe7 ♖dg8, played by Kramnik against Kasparov, doesn't equalize.

20 ♗xh6

The latest fashion. An old alternative is 20 exd8♕+, played by Yermolinsky against Ivanchuk in 1986, but that game didn't achieve any advantage for White.

20...♗d3 21 ♕a8+

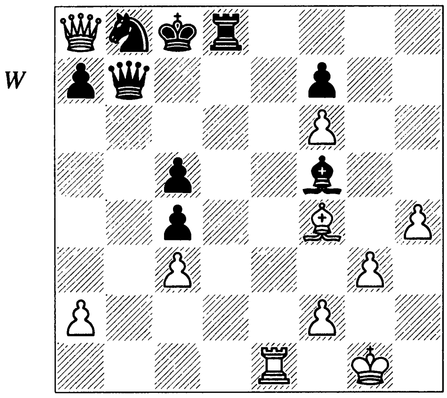
As the reader will remember, 21 ♘e4, as played in Beliavsky-Shirov, Ljubljana 1995, is not especially dangerous for Black. 21 exd8♕+ is bad according to Yermolinsky because of 21...♔xd8!

21...♘b8 22 exd8♕+ ♖xd8 23 ♖e1! bxc3 24 ♗f4 ♕b6

The only move. 24...♕b7? 25 ♖e7! would have shown the point of White's idea.

25 bxc3 ♗f5 26 h4 ♕b7!

Until this move everything has been played before in the game Yermolinsky-D. Gurevich, USA Championship 1994, which White won after 26...♗e6 27 ♔h2 ♖d7 28 h5, etc. The text forces White to go in for an ending which was considered lost for Black by Yermolinsky, but in fact is drawn.



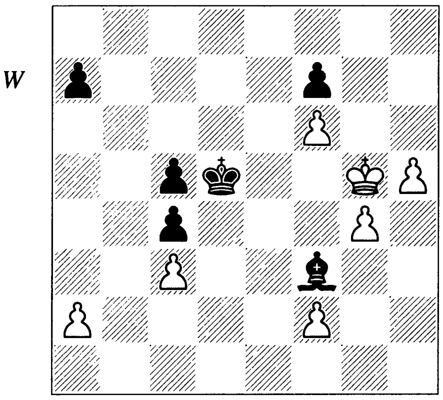
27 ♕xb7+ ♔xb7 28 ♖e7+ ♖d7 29 ♗xb8 ♔xb8 30 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 31 ♔g2 ♔c7 32 ♔f3 ♔d6 33 ♔f4 ♗c6!!

You have to find such moves at home if you play the Botvinnik variation! If White can get his king to g5 and pawn to f4 then Black can only resign. The bishop manoeuvre prevents this set-up.

34 ♔g5 ♗f3 35 ♔f5

White cannot force Black into zugzwang as the latter has space for his king.

35...♔d5 36 g4 ♔d6 37 h5 ♔d5 38 ♔f4 ♗d1 39 ♔g5 ♗f3



White has improved his position as much as he could, but it's not enough.

40 ♔f4

40 h6? ♗e4 41 f4 ♗h7 would suddenly lose as the king cannot now come to h6.

40...♗d1 41 ♔g5 ♗f3 42 ♔f4 ½-½

Drawn because of threefold repetition. As the reader will have realized, the final position had been analysed at home. Sometimes the Botvinnik variation gets so boring ...

5 Selected Endgames

During my chess career I have had some games that were particularly interesting in their final stages, and this gave me the idea of collecting them into a special chapter. Some of them are very simple and don't require much annotation, but endings such as the one against Lautier and particularly the one against Ruzhyale need a lot of deep analysis. The latter especially exercised a mesmeric power over me and I couldn't help publishing it.

Generally speaking this collection is rather small. Some of my most interesting endings arose in games included in other chapters of the book, but I still believe that one day I should make the effort to collect together all the interesting endgames that I have played. Here is my first attempt to do something about it.

Three Adjournments

This article was written in March 1989 and published in *Chess Review 64*.

In the 1988 USSR Championship Semi-Final in Klaipeda I made a particularly good start. However, I was not in the leading group for long. In the second half of the tournament I suffered five defeats, and finished with a result of 'minus two'. I think that one of the causes of this slump was a squandering of my strength, and, as a result, a large number of adjourned games. While in no way wishing to justify my own failure, I should nevertheless remark that the time control of two and a half hours for 40 moves adversely affects those players who play, so to speak, flat out.

In this sense the performance of Valery Salov in last year's Premier League is very revealing. As, incidentally, is a very recent example – the play of A. Anastasian in the USSR Young Masters Championship, where the Yerevan IM, after adjourning 12(!) games, one after another, squandered all his 'starting gains', and, naturally, dropped out of the battle for the top places.

I think that to a great extent this was the result of the five-hour control, which has been retained only in the USSR Championship Final and Semi-Final. In all other Soviet events, the players manage to get through two time scrambles in an evening ... The dual time control has been in place for several years now, but some consider that it is difficult to spending six successive hours at the board. Well, this is true. However, in my opinion, to analyse an unfinished game (sometimes right through the night) and then play it on, is nevertheless much more difficult than to play an extra hour in normal time.

[AS – Nowadays very few tournaments are played with adjournments, because computer chess is developing very fast. I think that the best time control for modern chess is 40 moves in two hours each, then twenty in one hour and then one hour for each to finish the game. This maintains the quality of play in every stage. The drawback of this, of course, is that a single game might sometimes last eight hours. The more common seven hours control is probably okay as well.]

So, the Semi-Final lasted for about a month. During this time I accumulated nine adjournments, three of which I offer for the readers' consideration.

Dokhoyan – Shirov

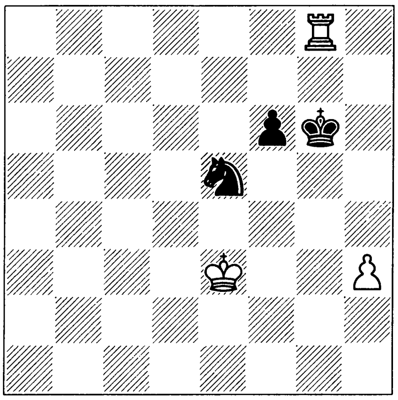
USSR Championship Semi-Final, Klaipeda 1988

In the following position the game's second 'interval' was announced, and Black sealed his 'secret' move:

92...♔h5

When I adjourned the game, I was still hoping to reach a draw, but my analysis

B



definitively established that there was no way of saving the game. I should mention that the simplest way for White to win was by 93 ♔f4 ♘g6+ 94 ♔e4 ♔g5 95 ♖g7 ♔h6 96 ♖a7 ♔g5 97 ♖a3 ♘e5 (if 97...♔h4 98 ♔f5, while after 97...f5+ 98 ♔f3 the win is technically straightforward) 98 ♖g3+ ♔h4 99 ♔f4. But it so happened that my opponent did not find this continuation, and he assumed that the most probable outcome was a draw.

There followed

93 ♔e4? ♔h4 94 ♖h8+ ♔g5 95 ♔d5?

A fundamentally incorrect plan. By playing his king to g3, White would still have retained winning chances.

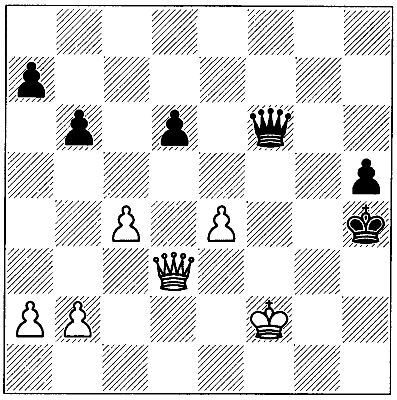
95...♘f3 96 ♔e6 ♘e5 97 ♔d5 ♘f3 98 ♔d6 ♘e5 99 ♔e6 ♘f3 100 ♔e7 ♘e5 101 ♖a8 ♘g6+ 102 ♔f7 ♘f4 103 ♖a3 f5 104 ♖c3 ♘xh3! 105 ♖xh3 ♔g4

It is not difficult to see that now Black is just in time:

106 ♖h6 f4 107 ♖g6+ ♔h3 108 ♖f6 ♔g3 109 ♔e6 f3 110 ♔e5 f2 111 ♔e4 ♔g2 112 ♔e3 f1♕ 113 ♖xf1 ♔xf1 ½-½

Magerramov – Shirov
USSR Championship Semi-Final, Klaipeda 1988

W



Black has a clear advantage, probably sufficient for a win. A brief analysis that same evening confirmed my optimistic expectations, so I didn't bother to go into details, since I was hoping to return to the position just before the adjournment session. But in the very next round my collection of adjournments was increased. I was now also faced by a difficult defence in my game with Psakhis, the analysis of which took up all my strength and time. When the Psakhis game was resumed I came close to a draw, but several blunders reduced all my efforts to nought ... So my mood before the next adjourned game was not a very happy one.

48 ♔g1

The sealed move.

48...♔g4 49 ♕d1+

A surprise. I had thought that after

49...♕f3

the win was not far off, since 50 ♕xd6 is not possible on account of 50...♕e3+ 51 ♔f1 ♕f4+. Bu t...

50 ♕d5!

It was essentially only here that I got down to 'analysis'. I quite quickly established that 49...♕f3 had been a mistake. I nevertheless decided to give a few 'sham' checks, and then return. And this evidently dulled my opponent's vigilance.

50...♕e3+ 51 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 52 ♔g1 ♕e1+ 53 ♔g2 ♕g3+ 54 ♔h1 ♕f3+ 55 ♔g1 ♕f6 56 ♕d1+?!

Again without thinking, but by this point I had already 'made my analysis'. Black faces more difficult problems after 56 a4, or even 56 a3, with the idea of 57 b4.

56...♔f4! 57 ♕d3!

Not 57 ♕xh5 ♕d4+, when the pawns are lost with check.

57...h4 58 b4

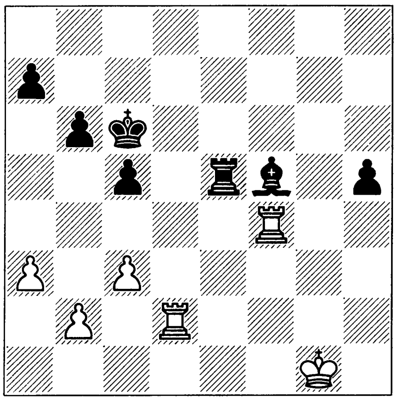
In the variation 58 a4 ♕g6+ 59 ♔f1 ♕xe4 60 ♕xd6+ ♔e3 Black has a clear win. There followed

58...♕a1+ 59 ♔g2 ♕b2+ 60 ♔h3 ♕xb4

And soon Black won.

Balashov – Shirov
USSR Championship Semi-Final, Klaipeda 1988

W



This position had already been published in *64* (1989 No.1) with the words 'how elegantly he [Balashov – *AS*] outplayed his young opponent.' It seemed to be a typical situation, with a highly-experienced grandmaster demonstrating his superiority in the endgame. But in fact it all could have been quite different ...

41 ♔f2 ♗e6 42 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 43 ♔xe2 ♗b3!?

The start of a very interesting plan, which the grandmaster had evidently overlooked. Even before the adjournment I had ascertained that 43...♗g4+ was bad in view of 44 ♔d3 ♔b5 45 c4+ ♔c6 46 ♖f6+ ♔b7 47 ♖f7+. Black also loses after 44...a5 45 ♖f6+ ♔c7 46 ♖h6.

44 ♖f5 a5 45 ♖xh5 b5 46 ♔e3 ♔d6 47 ♖h6+?

In my opinion, a significant inaccuracy. White could have won by 47 ♔f4 a4 (47...♗c2 loses to 48 b4!) 48 ♔f5 ♔d5 49 ♔f6+ ♔c4 50 ♖h2 ♗d1 51 ♔e5 ♔b3 52 ♔d5 b4 53 c4 bxa3 54 bxa3 ♔xa3 55 ♔xc5 ♗b3 56 ♖h3! ♔b2 57 ♔b4, etc.

47...♔d5 48 ♖a6?

It was still not too late to play 48 ♖h5+ ♔d6 49 ♔f4.

48...a4 49 ♖b6 ♔c4??

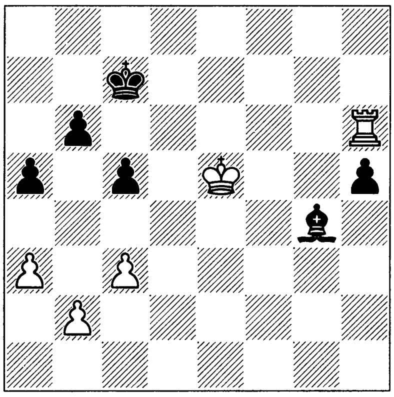
A blunder, resulting from tiredness. 49...♗c4 would have given quite an easy draw, since now White cannot return to the previous position – the bishop has undisputed control of the a2-g8 diagonal. Nothing is achieved by 50 ♖b8 ♔e5 51 ♖e8+ ♔d5 52 ♔f4 ♗a2 53 ♖d8+ ♔c4 54 ♔e5 ♔b3 55 ♖d2 b4, when the draw is obvious.

50 ♔d2 1-0

I had overlooked this move, and I was obliged to resign.

[AS – After 50...♗a2 White wins by playing 51 ♔c2 ♗b3+ 52 ♔c1 ♗a2 53 ♖d6 ♔b3 54 ♖d8 ♔c4 (54...b4 55 ♖b8) 55 ♔c2 ♗b3+ 56 ♔b1 and Black falls into zugzwang.]

W



This (or a similar) position could well have arisen in the game. In the books I was unable to find any such endgame. Incidentally, my opponent thought that in this situation Black had good chances of a draw.

After lengthy analysis I succeeded in discovering a clear-cut winning method, which I think will be of interest to readers.

1 ♔e4 ♗e2

If 1...♔b7 2 ♔d5. Also bad is 1...a4, since all the same Black cannot save his h-pawn, and the a-pawn will be unprotected.

2 ♖f6 ♗a6

Or 2...♗g4 3 ♔d5.

3 ♖f5 ♗b7+ 4 ♔e5 ♗g2 5 ♖xh5 ♗f3

White has managed to win a pawn, but for complete success he must also drive the bishop off the long diagonal.

6 ♖h7+ ♔c6 7 ♖h6+ ♔c7 8 ♖f6 ♗g2 9 c4 ♗h1 10 ♖f7+ ♔c6 11 ♖f1 ♗g2 12 ♖f2 ♗h1 13 ♖h2 ♗f3 14 ♔f4

Thus White has carried out his plan, and the remainder is clear.

14...♗d1 15 ♔e4 ♗g4 16 ♖h6+ ♔c7 17 ♖f6 ♗h3 18 ♖g6 ♗c8 19 ♖g7+ ♔d6 20 a4!

Now any pawn ending is lost for Black.

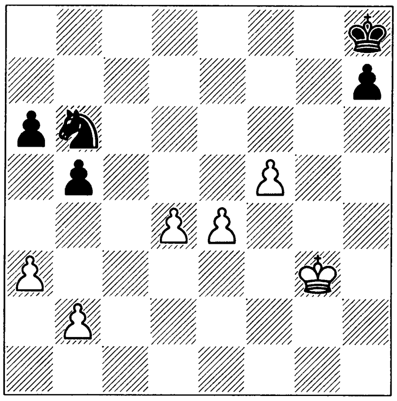
20...♗a6 21 b3 ♗c8 22 ♖g6+ ♔c7 23 ♔e5 ♗a6 24 ♖g8 ♔c6 25 ♖b8 ♔c7 26 ♖a8 ♗b7 27 ♖a7 ♔b8 28 ♖xb7+ ♔xb7 29 ♔d6 ♔a8 30 ♔c6 ♔a7 31 ♔c7 ♔a6 32 ♔b8

There may also be shorter ways, but this, certainly, is sufficiently clear-cut.

Ruzhyale – Shirov

USSR Youth Games, Kramatorsk 1989

These annotations are based on the article 'One tempo is a lot', published in *Shakhmaty Riga* in 1990. I must thank the Latvian player Gennady Kuzmichyov, whose suggestions and corrections to my analysis were very useful in completing that work six years ago. Nevertheless, even now I have noticed a few things – it is sad to admit that one of them changes the evaluation – that were missed then.

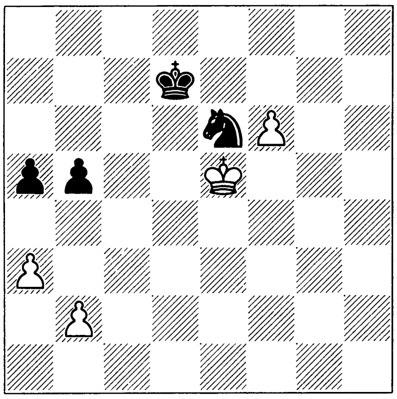


In a time scramble I had succeeded (not without my opponent's help) in converting a clearly inferior middlegame into a very sharp endgame. The first time control had passed, and the second now began. Black is now playing for a win, since he is a knight up and has a passed pawn on the edge of the board. But the three central pawns are also a formidable force. Later I analysed this ending a great deal, and it would appear that Black should win. But during the game, having only an hour for 20 moves, it was difficult to examine everything. However, I initially played correctly.

[AS – Now, after revision, I would say that the logical outcome of the endgame is a draw, although White has to be very accurate.]

42...♘c4

Interesting variations arise following 42...♔g7 43 ♔f4 (43 b3 is strongly met by 43...♘c4!, since 44 bxc4 bxc4 45 ♔f4 is not possible on account of 45...c3 46 ♔e3 c2 47 ♔d2 h5 48 d5 h4 49 d6 ♔f8! 50 f6 ♔e8! 51 e5 h3 52 e6 c1♕+ 53 ♔xc1 h2, when Black wins) 43...♔f7? (not allowing 44 d5, but now White gains a draw, whereas after 43...♘c4 [transposing into the game] Black wins, and the transposition of moves indicates that 42...♔g7 and 42...♘c4 are equivalent) 44 e5! a5 (if 44...♔g7 [with the idea of 45 ♔e4? h5 46 d5 h4 47 d6 h3 48 ♔f3 ♘c4 and Black wins] then 45 b3! is strong, depriving the knight of the c4 square; while 44...♔e7 45 ♔e4 h5 also looks bad on account of 46 ♔f4!) 45 ♔e4 h5 46 d5 h4 47 d6 h3 48 e6+ ♔e8 49 ♔f3 ♘c4 50 d7+ ♔d8 51 f6 ♘e5+ 52 ♔g3 ♘g6 (Black also fails to win by 52...h2 53 ♔xh2 ♘g4+ 54 ♔g3 ♘xf6 55 ♔f4, as the white king proceeds to the queenside) 53 ♔xh3 ♘f4+ 54 ♔g4 ♘xe6 55 ♔f5 ♔xd7 56 ♔e5.



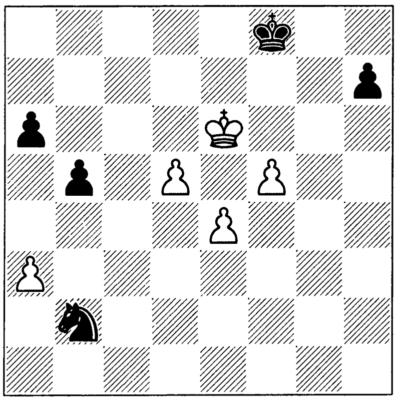
Here White can draw, e.g. 56...♘c7 57 f7 ♔e7 58 f8♕+ ♔xf8 59 ♔d6, or 56...♘c5 57 ♔d5 ♘d3 58 b3.

43 ♔f4

43 f6 does not work owing to 43...♔g8 44 ♔f4 ♔f7 45 e5 ♔e6 46 ♔g5 (46 d5+ ♔xd5 47 f7 ♘xe5! is also winning for Black) 46...♘e3 47 ♔f4 (or 47 ♔h6 ♘f5+ 48 ♔xh7 ♘xd4 and Black wins) 47...♘d5+ 48 ♔g5 ♘c7 49 ♔h6 (or 49 ♔f4 ♔d5) 49...♔f7 50 ♔xh7 ♘e6 51 d5 ♘g5+ 52 ♔h6 ♘f3 and Black is winning.

43...♔g7

Taking the pawn – 43...♘xb2 would have been weaker on account of 44 ♔e5! ♔g7 (not 44...♘d3+? 45 ♔e6 h5 46 f6 ♘f4+ 47 ♔f5 and White wins) 45 ♔e6 ♔f8 46 d5!

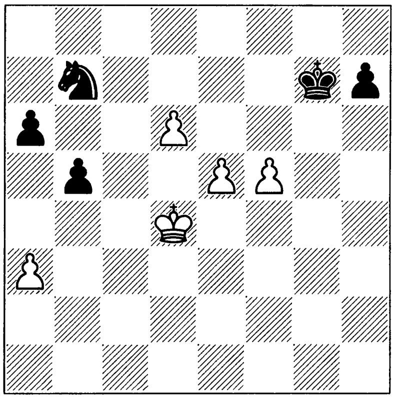


Black has a draw at best, e.g. 46...♘d3 47 d6 ♔e8 48 d7+ ♔d8 49 ♔d6 ♘c5!? 50 ♔xc5 ♔xd7 51 e5 h5 52 e6+ ♔e7 53 ♔d5 h4 54 f6+ ♔xf6 55 ♔d6 h3 56 e7 h2 57 e8♕ h1♕ with a draw.

[AS – Instead of 49...♘c5, stronger is 49...a5 50 f6 ♘e5! 51 ♔xe5 ♔xd7, but after 52 ♔d5 b4 53 axb4 axb4 54 e5 b3 55 e6+ ♔e8 56 ♔d6 b2 57 f7+ ♔f8 58 e7+ ♔xf7 59 ♔d7 b1♕ 60 e8♕+ ♔f6 61 ♕e6+ ♔g5 62 ♕e3+ White still draws, because Black can't avoid perpetual check.]

44 b3!?

A very interesting position arises after 44 e5 ♘xb2 45 d5 ♘d3+ 46 ♔e4 ♘c5+ 47 ♔d4 (47 ♔f4? a5!) 47...♘b7 48 d6.



Black has a choice: which pawn should he move – 'a' or 'h'?

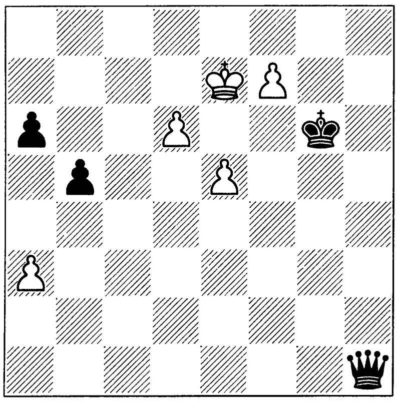
a) 48...a5 49 ♔d5 b4 50 axb4 and again he has two moves:

a1) 50...axb4 51 ♔e6 (but not 51 ♔c6? b3 52 e6 b2 53 e7 ♔f7 54 ♔d7 ♘xd6 and wins) 51...b3 (a fantastic position arises after 51...♘d8+ 52 ♔d7 b3 53 ♔xd8! b2 54 ♔e7 b1♕ 55 f6+ ♔g6 56 f7. Black is a queen up, but it is not difficult to see that one of the white pawns will promote, and Black has at best a draw, e.g. 56...♕b7+ 57 d7 ♕b4+ 58 ♔e8 ♕b8+ 59 d8♕ ♕xe5+ 60 ♕e7 ♕b8+) 52 ♔e7 b2 53 f6+ ♔g6 54 f7 b1♕ 55 f8♕, and White has everything in order, e.g. 55...♕f5 56 ♕g8+ ♔h6 57 ♕d5 ♔g7!? 58 ♕g2+! ♕g6 59 ♕d5 with a draw.

a2) 50...a4 51 ♔c6! (now 51 ♔e6 is bad: 51...♘d8+ 52 ♔d7 a3 53 e6 [or 53 ♔xd8 a2] 53...a2 54 e7 ♘f7 55 e8♕ a1♕ and Black wins) 51...♘d8+ 52 ♔c7 a3 53 e6 a2

54 e7 ♘f7 55 d7! (after 55 e8♕ a1♕ Black should win) 55...a1♕ 56 d8♕ ♕c3+ 57 ♔d7 ♕d4+ 58 ♔c8 with a draw.

b) 48...h5! 49 ♔d5 h4 50 ♔e6 ♘d8+ 51 ♔d7 h3 52 ♔xd8 (the alternative is 52 e6 h2 53 e7 ♘f7 54 e8♕ h1♕ 55 ♕c8!, and here Black wins by 55...♕d5! 56 ♕xa6 ♕c4! 57 ♔e7 [the only move] 57...♘e5! 58 d7 ♕c5+ 59 ♔e6 [or 59 ♕d6 ♘c6+ 60 ♔e6 ♘d4+] 59...♘f7! 60 d8♕ ♘xd8+ 61 ♔d7 ♘f7) 52...h2 53 ♔e7 h1♕ 54 f6+ ♔g6 55 f7



In this fantastic position (we have already seen something similar – cf. variation 'a', 48...a5) a win for Black can nevertheless be found: 55...♕h7! 56 e6 ♕g7 57 ♔e8 (57 d7 ♕f6+ 58 ♔d6 ♔f5; 57 ♔d7 ♔f6; 57 ♔d8 ♕f6+ 58 ♔c7 ♔f5! 59 d7 ♔xe6) 57...♔f6 58 d7! ♔xe6 59 d8♘+ ♔d5 60 f8♕ ♕xf8+ 61 ♔xf8 (amazing: it is now White who has a knight, and Black who will have a passed pawn!) 61...a5 62 ♘b7 a4! 63 ♘a5 ♔c5 64 ♔e7 b4 65 axb4+ ♔xb4 66 ♘c6+ ♔c3, and Black wins.

This variation, and also the one beginning with 52 e6, are, I think, the key variations for the evaluation of the initial position, since the move made by Ruzhyale should have led to the same thing.

[AS – Here I made a serious mistake in my analysis. After 52 e6! h2 53 e7 ♘f7 54 e8♕ h1♕ White can play 55 ♔c7! (not 55 ♕c8? as indicated before) and Black can't win, for example 55...♕c1+ 56 ♕c6 ♕c4 (after 56...♕xa3 57 ♕g2+ ♔f8 58 ♕a8+ White makes a perpetual check – this is what I missed five years ago) 57 ♔b6 ♕d4+ 58 ♕c5! (but not 58 ♔xa6?! ♘xd6 59 ♕d7+ ♔f6 60 ♕e6+ ♔g5 61 ♕g6+ ♔f4 62 f6 ♕d5! 63 ♕h6+ ♔g4 64 ♕g6+ [or 64 ♕g7+ ♔f5!] ♔f3 65 ♔b6 ♘c4+ 66 ♔c7 ♕d6+ 67 ♔c8 ♕c6+, followed by 68...♘d6! or 58 ♔c7?! ♕a7+ 59 ♔c8 a5! 60 d7 ♕d4! with excellent winning chances for Black in both cases) ♕d3 61 ♔c7 ♔f6 62 d7 and the maximum Black can get is queen and knight against queen.]

44...♘d2

The a3 pawn is 'poisoned': 44...♘xa3? 45 d5! ♘c2 (or 45...a5 46 d6 ♔f8 47 e5 ♘c2 48 d7 ♔e7 49 e6 and 50 f6 and wins) 46 ♔e5! (not 46 d6? ♘b4 47 e5 a5 and Black wins) 46...a5 47 ♔d6! and now:

a) 47...♔f8 48 ♔c7! and 49 d6.

b) 47...a4 48 bxa4 b4 (48...bxa4 49 ♔e7 a3 50 f6+ ♔g6 51 f7 a2 52 f8♕ a1♕ 53 ♕f5+ ♔g7 54 ♕g4+ ♔h6 55 ♕h3+ and 56 ♕g2+) 49 ♔e7 b3 50 f6+ ♔g6 51 f7 b2 52 f8♕ b1♕ 53 ♕f5+ ♔h6 (53...♔g7? 54 ♕f6+, mating) 54 d6, and White wins.

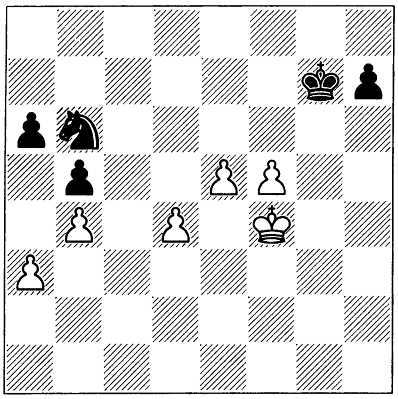
c) *[AS – Black should play 47...♔f7 48 ♔c7 a4 49 bxa4 bxa4 50 d6 a3 51 d7 a2 52 d8♕ a1♕ 53 ♕d7+ ♔f8 with a draw. White can get the same result by playing 46 d6 (instead of 46 ♔e5) ♘b4 47 e5 a5 48 ♔e4 a4 49 bxa4 bxa4 50 e6 ♔f6 51 ♔d4 a3 52 ♔c5 ♘d3+ 53 ♔b6 a2 54 d7 a1♕ 55 d8♕+ ♔xf5 56 ♕xd3+ ♔xe6 57 ♕xh7.]*

45 d5!

Although this move doesn't save White, it sets Black much more difficult problems than 45 b4, on which I was intending 45...♘c4 46 e5 ♘b6!

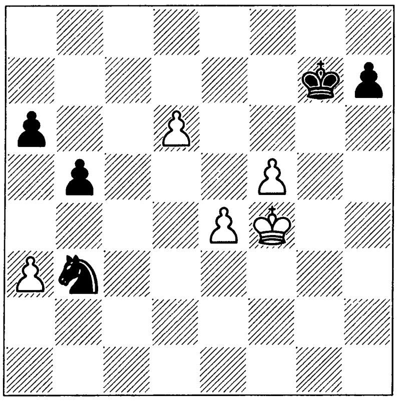
(see diagram on following page)

Black has provoked the b2-b4 advance, and White finds himself in zugzwang. On 47 ♔e4 there follows 47...h5 48 ♔f4 (48 d5 h4 49 d6 h3 50 ♔f3 ♘c4) 48...♔h6! 49 e6 ♔g7 50 ♔e5 (50 ♔g5 ♘d5 51 ♔xh5 ♔f6) 50...h4 51 f6+ ♔f8 52 d5 h3 53 d6 ♘c4+ 54 ♔d5 h2 and Black wins, while if 47 ♔g4 then the simplest is 47...♘d5 48 ♔g5 h6+ 49 ♔g4 ♔f7! (the second zugzwang) 50 ♔f3 (or 50 ♔h5 ♘e3 51 f6 ♘d5 52 ♔xh6 ♘xf6!) 50...h5 51 ♔e4 h4 52 ♔xd5



h3 53 e6+ ♔e8! 54 f6 h2 and Black is winning.

45...♘xb3 46 d6



46...♔f7?

Time-trouble was approaching, and here I deviated from the correct path, assuming that White was obliged to play 47 ♔e5, when Black wins by 47...♘a5! 48 ♔d5 ♔f6! 49 ♔c5 h5 50 ♔b6 ♘c4+ 51 ♔c7 ♘e5 52 d7 ♘f7! 53 d8♕+ ♘xd8 54 ♔xd8 h4.

Instead of 46...♔f7?, Black could have won by 46...♘c5! 47 ♔e5 h5 48 ♔d5 ♘b7 49 e5 (49 ♔e6 ♘d8+ 50 ♔e7 ♘f7 51 d7 h4 52 f6+ ♔g6 53 e5 ♘xe5! is also winning for Black) 49...h4, when we reach a position that was examined in the notes to White's 44th move (variation 'b'). My opponent's reply came as a surprise to me.

[AS – We already know that variation 'b' also leads to a draw.]

47 e5! ♘c5 48 ♔g5??

Just when he was within reach of a draw, Ruzhyale also blunders. He should have played 48 ♔e3 (the king in the centre!) 48...h5 49 ♔d4 ♘b7 50 ♔d5 h4 51 e6+ (this is why the king does best not to stand at f7!) 51...♔f6 52 e7 ♔f7 53 ♔c6 h3 54 ♔d7 ♘c5+ 55 ♔d8 ♘b7+, with a draw.

48...a5

Now there is no way of saving the game.

49 d7 ♔e7 50 e6 ♘e4+ 51 ♔f4

If 51 ♔h6 then 51...b4 52 axb4 axb4 53 ♔g7 b3 54 d8♕+ ♔xd8 55 ♔f8 ♘f6, or 55 ♔f7 ♘d6+.

51...♘f6 52 ♔g5

On 52 ♔e5 there follows 52...♘xd7+ 53 exd7 b4, and wins.

52...♘d5 0-1

It wouldn't be right to say that everything in this ending depended on a single tempo: half a tempo would be more precise. Incidentally, I had something similar in a game with Dolmatov (Klaipeda 1988), only there I had two pawns for a bishop, and the value of a tempo was rather less. This game was thoroughly analysed by Dvoretsky in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1988 No.3.

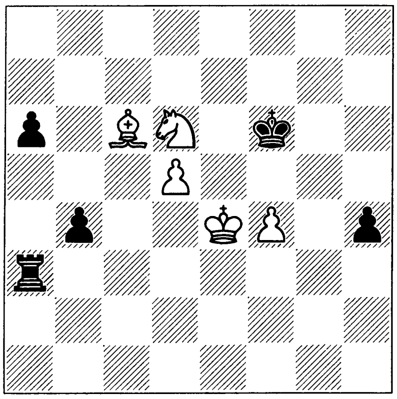
[AS – It is strange that for six years I held the wrong assessment on this ending, but at least now I feel that I know the truth. I should also like to thank the little-known Latvian player Gennady Kuzmichyov, who helped me to analyse this ending in 1989 (when chess computers almost didn't exist!)]

Shirov – Minasian

57th USSR Championship Eliminator, Frunze 1989

The annotations for this extract were made in October 1989 and first appeared in *Shakhmaty Riga*.

In the following diagram, the time control had just been reached, and I had the opportunity to think. I reflected over my next move for some twenty-five minutes.



Earlier I had intended 41 ♘e8+ ♔f7 42 d6, but in this calm situation I now saw that after 42...b3 43 ♔d3 b2+ 44 ♔c2 ♖c3+ I would lose. I could, of course, have played 42 ♘d6+ with a probable draw, but I wanted to win! Therefore I played

41 ♔d4

After some thought Black replied

41...♖a1

Also possible was 41...b3 42 ♔c3 (42 ♘c4 ♖a1 and 42 ♘e4+ ♔f5 43 d6 b2 44 ♘d2 ♖g3 45 d7 ♖g8 also draw) 42...h3 43 ♘e4+ ♔f7! (43...♔f5? 44 d6 h2 45 ♘c5 wins for White) 44 d6 h2 45 ♘g5+ ♔f6 46 d7 ♔e7 47 ♘e6 b2+ 48 ♔xb2 ♖d3 49 d8♕+ ♖xd8 50 ♘xd8 ♔xd8 51 ♔c3 a5, and it is not difficult to see that the position is drawn.

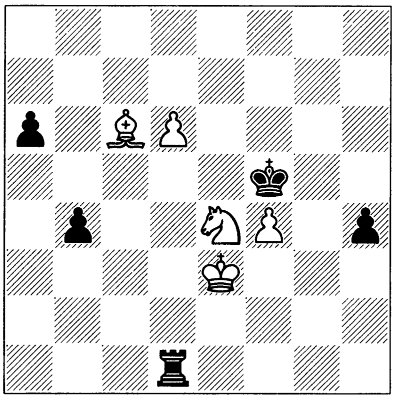
42 ♘e4+ ♔f5?

This move loses. Correct was 42...♔f7 43 d6 ♖d1+! 44 ♔e5 b3 45 ♘g5+ (45 ♗d5+? ♖xd5+! 46 ♔xd5 b2 47 ♘d2 h3 48 d7 ♔e7 49 ♔c6 ♔d8 wins for Black) 45...♔f8 46 ♘e6+ ♔f7 47 ♘g5+ (47 d7? b2 48 d8♕ ♖xd8 49 ♘xd8+ ♔e7 50 ♗e4 h3! 51 ♘c6+ ♔f8 also wins for Black) 47...♔f8, with a draw.

43 d6 ♖d1+ 44 ♔e3 *(D)*

44...♔e6

During the game I could not see a win after 44...b3 45 d7 b2 46 ♘d2! ♖xd2 47 ♗e4+ ♔e6 48 ♔xd2 ♔xd7. Indeed, nothing is promised either by 49 ♔c2 ♔e6 50 ♔xb2 h3 51 ♔c3 h2 52 ♔d4 a5, or 49 ♔e3 a5 50 ♔f3 a4 51 ♔g4 ♔e6 52 ♗b1 ♔d5 53 f5 a3 54 ♔xh4 (54 f6 ♔e6) 54...♔c4 55 ♗a2+ ♔c3 56 f6 ♔c2 57 f7 b1♕ 58 ♗xb1+ ♔xb1 59 f8♕ a2. But then in analysis the Leningrad player Alexei Yuneyev discovered the simple, but by no means obvious 49 ♗f5+! ♔d6 50 ♔c2, when questions, as they say, are superfluous.



45 d7 ♔e7 46 f5 ♖xd7

The only move.

47 ♗xd7 ♔xd7 48 ♔f4!

It's all over. The white knight holds the queenside pawns, while the king picks up the h4 pawn and is in time to defend the f5 pawn. The game concluded:

48...♔e7 49 ♔g4 a5 50 ♔xh4 a4 51 ♔g5 a3 52 ♘d2 ♔d6 53 f6 a2 54 ♘b3 ♔d5 55 f7 ♔c4 56 ♘a1 1-0

Practical Problems of Opposite-Coloured Bishops

This article was completed in the Autumn of 1990 and published in *Shakhmaty Riga*.

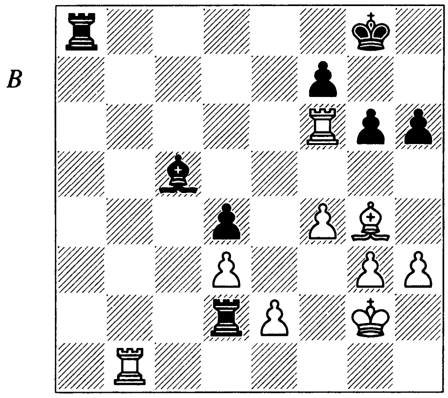
Endings with opposite-colour bishops can, in my opinion, be regarded as a little-explored field of chess theory. Amateurs are of the opinion that these endings 'always' end in a draw, and that wins can be regarded as exceptions. It will be understood that I have in mind endings where one side has a material advantage of not more than one pawn. But in practice, one side wins so often that the question suggests itself: which is the exception, and which the rule?

However, I am not intending to conduct a statistical study here. I should merely like to mention that such endings have a great similarity with the middlegame, because the stronger side, if he doesn't have a forced win, is obliged to engage in manoeuvring play.

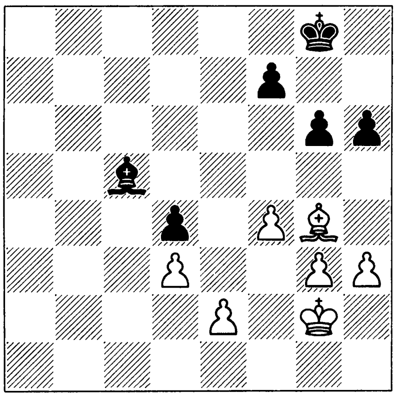
I will attempt to describe one such ending. Or more precisely, one of my most important games, played in the sixth round of the Lvov Zonal (February 1990).

Shirov – Vyzhmanavin

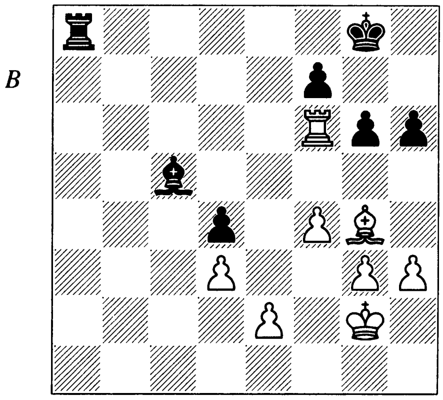
Lvov Zonal 1990



So that the reader should understand better the essence of the position, I will carry out a little experiment. First I will remove from the board both pairs of rooks.



The draw in this case is obvious, since White cannot even advance his e-pawn. Now let's again place a white rook at f6, and a black one at a8.



In this position White already has certain winning chances, since he can manoeuvre while avoiding the exchange of rooks. Even so, by playing, for example, 1...♗e7 2 ♖c6 ♖a7 with the idea of 3...♔g7 and 4...♗f6, Black should, in my opinion, be able to set up an impregnable defence, and if he is a strong player (not even necessarily as strong a grandmaster as Alexei Vyzhmanavin), then a draw is inevitable. Let's now return to the game position.

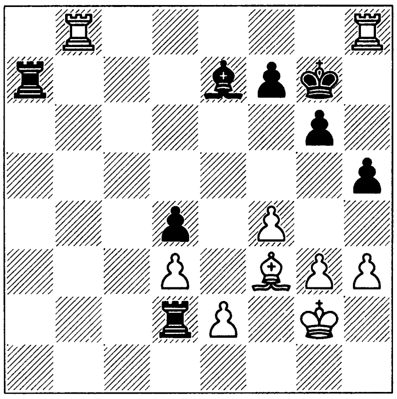
With two rooks, White can develop a strong attack, since there are several weaknesses in Black's position. I should also like to draw attention to the unfortunate placing of the black rook at d2, which is running up against an impregnable wall of pawns at d3 and e2. In order to include this rook in the defence, Black will have to spend one or even several tempi. It can be concluded that Black must try to exchange at least one pair of rooks, whereas White will try to be the first to create serious threats.

39...♖a7?

Black made this move with the flag on his clock already horizontal (the time limit was two hours for 40 moves and one hour for the next 20). Black, quite understandably, parries the main threat of 40 ♖b7, but now White achieves complete co-ordination of his forces, and will be able to dictate matters. Black should have played 39...♗e7! 40 ♖c6 ♖da2!, with the idea on 41 ♖b7 of playing 41...♖2a7 42 ♖cc7 ♖xb7 43 ♖xb7 ♔f8, while if 41 ♖b5 ♔g7. His defences would then have been very difficult to breach.

40 ♖c6 ♗a3

After this, my opponent's last move before the time control, I no longer had any doubts about winning. In analysis (after the game) I also discovered a win against 40...♗e7, which I should like to demonstrate: 41 ♖b8+ ♔g7 42 ♖cc8! (threatening 43 ♖g8+ ♔f6 44 ♖h8 ♔g7 45 ♖bg8+ and 46 ♖xh6, so Black's reply is forced) 42...h5 43 ♖g8+ ♔h7 44 ♖h8+ ♔g7 45 ♗f3! (of course not 45 ♗xh5? gxh5 46 ♖bg8+ ♔f6 47 ♖h6+ ♔f5 48 ♔f3 f6!, and Black stands no worse)

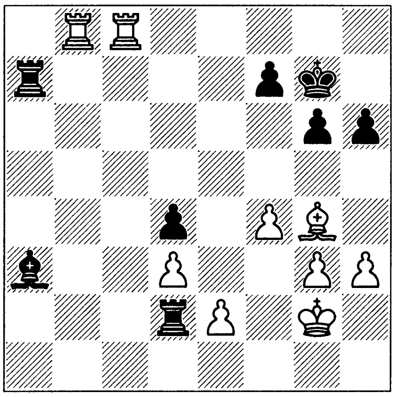

B

With 45 ♗f3 White threatens to continue 46 g4 hxg4 47 hxg4 and 48 g5, after which the black king will be in a mating net. And if Black tries to parry this threat by 45...♗d6, then 46 ♖bg8+! ♔f6 47 ♖d8 ♖a6 48 ♖d7! ♔g7 49 ♖hd8, with a decisive advantage.

I therefore conclude that 40...♗e7 loses by force.

41 ♖b5!?

For a long time (until I got down to a serious analysis) I regarded this move as the best way to win. Indeed, during the game I calculated few concrete variations, but relied in the first instance on a plan. And the plan was a simple one – to play 42 f5 and exchange the white f-pawn for the black g-pawn. After this Black is left with three weak pawns – d4, f7 and h6, and White can mount a combined attack, in which both rooks and his bishop participate, and, in the distant future, perhaps also his king. To this it should be added that the black pieces cannot immediately be included in the defence. I had no doubt that my plan should lead to a win, and therefore I did not seek any alternatives. After winning the game, I was still sure about the correctness of 41 ♖b5. But now I see that it would have been stronger and simpler to play 41 ♖b8+! ♔g7 42 ♖cc8! (as in the 40...♗e7 variation).

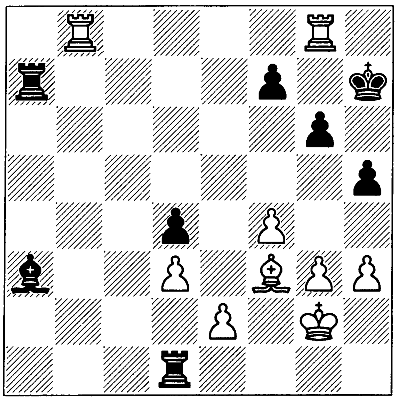

B

43 ♖g8+ ♔f6 44 ♖bd8 is again threatened, and it isn't apparent how Black can simultaneously defend his d4 and f7 pawns. The following is an instructive variation: 42...♖b2 43 ♖g8+ ♔f6 44 ♖bd8 ♖b4 45 ♖d6+ ♔e7 46 ♖dxg6! fxg6 47 ♖g7+ and 48 ♖xa7 and wins.

The only possibility of counterplay, in my opinion, is 42...h5 43 ♖g8+ ♔h7 44 ♗f3 ♖d1! *(D)*

Black's idea after 45 ♖h8+ ♔g7 46 ♖bg8+ ♔f6 47 ♖d8 is to sacrifice a second pawn by 47...♗c1!, and if 48 ♖xd4 ♗e3 49 ♖d6+ ♔g7 50 ♖e8 ♖g1+ 51 ♔h2 ♗f2 to retain certain drawing chances. Instead of 45 ♖h8+, more convincing is 45 f5! gxf5 46 ♖h8+ ♔g7 47 ♖bg8+ ♔f6 48 ♖h6+ ♔e5 (48...♔e7? 49 ♗c6!, and wins) 49 ♖d8!

W



f6 (49...♖a5? 50 ♖e8+) 50 ♖xh5, when the rest is, so to speak, the 'gathering in of the harvest'.

41 ♖b8+! was undoubtedly much better than 41 ♖b5!? However, from a practical perspective I don't consider my choice to be a blunder. After evaluating the possible consequences of 41 ♖b5, I was, as I have already mentioned, firmly convinced that I would gradually win. And at the same time the move 41 ♖b8+ demanded the calculation of concrete variations, and in attempting to work out everything I could have ended up in time-trouble. If during a game I see one way to win, I prefer not to look for another.

41...♔g7 42 ♖d5!

An important nuance. The bishop is driven to b2, from where it cannot control f6, and where it will block the path of the rook at d2, which comes into play too late.

42...♗b2 43 f5 gxf5 44 ♖xf5

Threatening both 45 ♗h5 followed by 46 ♖df6, as well as 45 ♖ff6. Therefore Black's reply is forced.

44...♖d1 45 ♗f3!

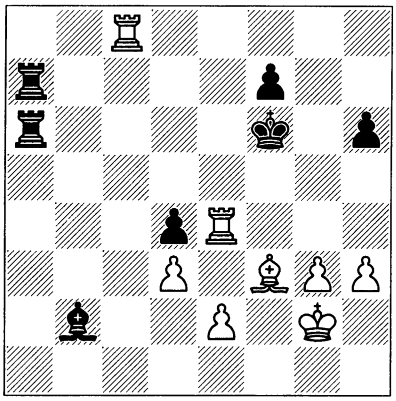
Now 45 ♗h5 ♖c1! 46 ♖cf6 ♖cc7 or 45 ♖ff6 ♗c1 is no longer effective. White intends first to drive the black king away from g7, and then to concentrate on the main weakness – the h6 pawn.

45...♖da1

45...♖c1 fails to 46 ♖b6 ♗a3 (or 46...♖c2 47 ♖f4) 47 ♖f4.

46 ♖f4 ♖1a6 47 ♖g4+ ♔f8 48 ♖c8+ ♔e7 49 ♖e4+ ♔f6

W



After thinking for some ten minutes, I nevertheless failed to find an immediate win. In order to keep a sufficient reserve of time, I decided to make a move that was useful in all respects. The white king will be well placed at h3.

50 h4! ♔g7?

The decisive mistake in a poor position. Understandably, Vyzhmanavin did not like the idea of 51 ♖g8!, which I was intending to play next move. Two other continuations came into consideration, even though they too would not have saved the game:

a) 50...♗c3 51 ♖g8! (but not 51 ♔h3 ♔g7! 52 ♖ee8 ♗d2 or 51 ♖d8 ♖e6! 52 ♖f4+ ♔e7, and Black can still resist) 51...♖a5 (the threat was 52 ♖f4+ ♔e7 53 ♗h5 ♖f6 54 ♖e4+ ♖e6 55 ♖e8+! ♔xe8 56 ♖xe6+ and 57 ♖xh6, with a two-pawn advantage) 52 ♖eg4!! (this move creates the almost irresistible threat of 53 ♖h8) 52...♖7a6 (evidently best) 53 ♖h8 ♔e7 54 ♖e4+ ♔d7 55 ♖f8! ♖f6 (55...f6 56 ♖ee8) 56 ♗g4+, and it's not difficult to see that, after driving the black king to the queenside, White picks up the kingside pawns in the end.

b) The toughest defence, in my opinion, was 50...♖e6! 51 ♖f4+! ♔g7 (51...♔e7? 52 ♗h5!). After this I was intending 52 ♗e4!, and didn't calculate any further. Now I can say that on the possible move 52...♗c3 (with the idea of 53...♗d2) White replies 53 ♖d8!, and Black is still extremely restricted. The 'active' 53...♖a2 doesn't work on account of 54 ♖d7!

♖xe2+ 55 ♔h3 ♖f6 56 ♖g4+ ♔f8 57 ♗h7! ♔e8 58 ♖a7, when there is no normal defence against the mate. Another variation appeals to me: 53...♗b2 (I don't see a more useful move) 54 ♖g4+ ♔f6 55 ♖gg8! (threatening 56 ♖h8) 55...♖a4 56 g4! (56 ♖h8? ♗c1) 56...♗c1 57 ♖d7! (the black king is trapped!) 57...♗d2 58 ♔f3! ♖e5 59 ♗d5! ♖e3+ 60 ♔f2 ♖e7 (there is nothing else) 61 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 62 ♖g7, and White wins.

In the above variations White's moves were easy to find, since they were in keeping with his basic plan. However Black tries to defend his weaknesses, White, by fully co-ordinating his forces, finds a breach in the defence.

After the move in the game White has a forced win.

51 ♖ee8! ♖a1

A gesture of despair. But there was the familiar threat of 52 ♖g8+ ♔f6 53 ♖h8, winning a second pawn, and nothing is changed by 51...♗c3 52 ♖cd8!

52 ♖g8+ ♔f6 53 ♖c6+ ♔e7 54 ♖xh6 ♗c1 55 ♖hh8 ♗e3 56 ♖e8+ ♔f6 57 ♖hg8 ♖g1+ 58 ♔h3 ♗f2?!

58...♖e7 was slightly more tenacious.

59 g4 ♖a6 60 ♖e4! ♖e6 61 ♖f4+ ♔e7 62 g5

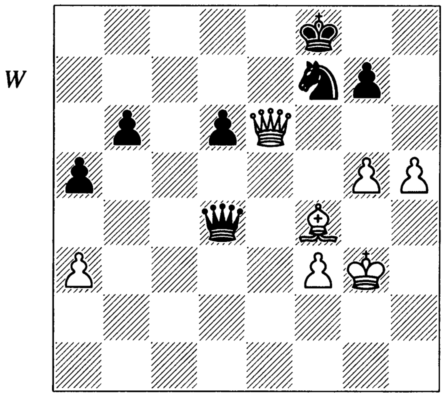
This concludes matters, since there is no defence against 63 ♖g7. The threat can be delayed for just one move – 63...♗e3 63 ♖f5. The second time-control had been reached, and I began filling in the envelope in the event of the game being adjourned. But Alexei Vyzhmanavin sensibly judged that there was no point in wasting effort on the adjournment of a hopeless position, and he congratulated me on my win.

Shirov – Prié

Torcy 1990

These annotations are based on my notes in *Informator 49*.

As usual, I am giving the position which arose more or less after the first time control. In my teenage years I used to have a high level of concentration in the fifth and sixth hours. It is most important to completely switch off the first forty moves of the game from your mind and take the new position as the starting one, and of course, one needs a lot of energy to do this properly. In this particular game I was winning several times but somehow misplayed it. In the diagram position it already seems that Black's drawing chances are quite good, because he threatens several queen checks. However, after long thought I found a winning plan. White's trumps are his bishop against the knight and the clear superiority of his pawn position.



1 ♗e3!

1 g6? just allows a perpetual after 1...♕g1+ 2 ♔h4 ♕h1+ 3 ♕h3 ♕e1+.

1...♕c3!

Of course I needed to calculate the consequences of the queen exchange after 1...♕e5+ 2 ♕xe5 ♘xe5. I believe that White wins with 3 a4! (3 ♗xb6 a4 is less clear) 3...♘d7 (3...♘c4 4 ♗d4) 4 ♔g4 ♘c5 5 ♔f5 ♘xa4 6 ♗d4, with an inevitable 7 h6, queening.

2 ♕e4!

2 g6? ♕e1+ again allows a perpetual. The idea of the text is to free the e6 square for the king!

2...♕e1+

The continuation 2...d5 3 ♕f4 is winning for White.

3 ♔g4 ♘e5+ 4 ♔f5 ♕h1

Wisely considering the h5 pawn to be his main enemy, Prié rejects the natural 4...♕f1 5 ♔e6! ♕c4+ (5...♕h3+ 6 ♔xd6 is lost; while 5...♕xf3 6 ♕xf3+ ♘xf3 fails to 7 a4!!, and the pawns on b6 and a5 will fall) 6 ♕xc4 ♘xc4, because 7 ♗d4! seems to be winning in the line 7...♘xa3 8 f4 ♘c2 9 ♗b2! a4 10 f5 a3 11 ♗c3 b5 12 h6.

5 ♕a8+!

It is better to avoid 5 ♔e6 ♕xh5.

5...♔e7 6 ♕b7+ ♘d7 7 ♔g6!

Now it's clear that the pawn will promote one day. Black has no chance of a perpetual, so the game is over.

7...♕h3 8 ♗d4! d5

Or 8...♕e6+ 9 ♔xg7 ♕f7+ 10 ♔h6.

9 ♔xg7 ♕xf3

9...♕xh5 10 ♕xd5.

10 ♗f6+ ♔d6 11 h6 ♕e3 12 h7 ♘xf6 13 gxf6! ♕g5+ 14 ♔f7 ♕h5+ 15 ♔g8 1-0

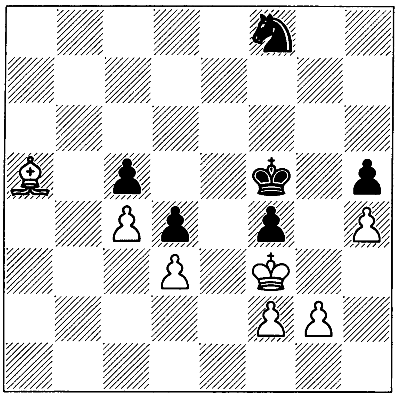
Black resigned in view of 15...♕g6+ 16 ♕g7 ♕e8+ 17 ♕f8+ and wins.

Torre – Shirov

Manila Interzonal 1990

These annotations are based on my notes in *Informator 49*.

W



The game was adjourned a few moves before this position arose and my brief analysis convinced me that the position was objectively lost. However, I set up a trap into which Torre now falls.

1 ♗d8?

The winning idea would have been to go immediately for forced variations, e.g. 1 ♗b6! ♘g6 (the only move, as 1...♘d7? just loses another pawn after 2 ♗c7; while 1...♘e6 2 ♗a7! ♔e5 [forced] 3 ♗b8+ ♔f5 4 ♗d6 leads to zugzwang) 2 ♔e2! (2 ♗xc5? ♘xh4+ 3 ♔e2 ♘xg2 4 ♗xd4 h4! is an easy draw for Black) 2...♘xh4 3 g3! leaving Black with unpleasant choice between:

a) 3...♘g6 4 ♗xc5 ♔e5 5 ♔f3! fxg3 6 fxg3 h4 7 ♔g4! hxg3 8 ♔xg3 ♘h8 (or 8...♘f4 9 ♗d6+) 9 ♔g4! (not 9 ♗f8 ♘g6 10 ♗g7+? ♔f5 11 ♗xd4 ♘f4, with a draw) 9...♘g6 (9...♘f7 10 ♗f8 ♔f6 11 ♔f4) 10 ♔g5 ♘h8 11 ♗xd4+! ♔xd4 12 ♔f6 winning; or

b) 3...f3+ 4 ♔d2 ♘g6 5 ♗xc5 ♔e5 6 ♔c2! and again Black has several possibilities, but none of them work:

b1) 6...h4 7 gxh4 ♘xh4 8 ♗f8! ♔f6 9 ♔b3 ♘f5 (9...♘g2 10 c5; 9...♘g6 10 ♗c5 ♔e5 11 ♗a7!) 10 ♔a4 ♘e3 11 c5! ♘d1 12 c6 ♔e6 13 ♔b5! ♘xf2 14 ♔a6 ♘xd3 15 c7 and wins; or

b2) 6...♘h8 7 ♗f8! ♔f6 [forced] 8 ♔b3 ♘f7 9 ♔a4! ♘e5 (9...♘g5 10 c5! ♔e6 11 c6 ♘h3 12 ♔b5!) 10 ♗c5! ♘xd3 11 ♗xd4+ ♔e6 12 ♔b5 and wins.

1...♘g6

Now Black should hold the draw, as by precise play he can avoid the positions considered in the previous annotation. It's very unpleasant to defend the pawns blocked on dark squares, but it seems that White can't make progress even with such a powerful bishop. Besides he has a weakness on h4 as well.

2 ♔e2 ♔e6 3 ♔d2

Or 3 ♔f3 ♔f5.

3...♔d7 4 ♗g5 ♔e6 5 ♔e1

The pawn exchange 5 g3 fxg3 6 fxg3 in order to protect h4 would also lead to a draw after 6...♔f5 7 ♗d8 ♘e5 8 ♗c7 ♘d7 9 ♔e2 (9 ♔c2 ♔g4 10 ♔b3 ♔f3 11 ♔a4 ♔e3 12 ♔b5 ♔xd3 13 ♔c6 ♔xc4! 14 ♔xd7 ♔d5 15 g4 [forced] 15...hxg4 16 h5=) 9...♔g4 10 ♗d6 ♔f5 11 ♔f3 ♔e6!

5...♔f5 6 ♗d8 ♔e6 7 ♔e2 ♔d7!

Only so! If I had played 7...♔f5? then my opponent would definitely have gone for 8 ♗b6! obtaining the already known position.

8 ♗g5 ♔e6 9 ♔f3 ♔f5?!

9...♔e5! would have been more precise, but it seems that the text doesn't lose either.

10 ♗d8 ♔e5! 11 ♗c7+ ♔f5 12 ♔e2 ♘xh4!

Of course, not 12...♔e6?! 13 ♔f1!, intending to get his king to h3, when White gets all his winning chances again.

13 g3 f3+! 14 ♔d2 ♘g6 15 ♗d6 ♘e5 16 ♗xc5 ♘c6

The knight both defends d4 and stops White's passed pawn. White's only winning chance would be to go to b5 with his king, but he cannot do so because of the f2 pawn.

17 ♔e1

17 ♔c2? ♔g4 18 ♔b3 ♔h3 19 ♔a4 ♔g2 20 ♔b5 ♔xf2 21 ♔xc6 ♔xg3 22 ♗xd4 h4 just loses by one tempo.

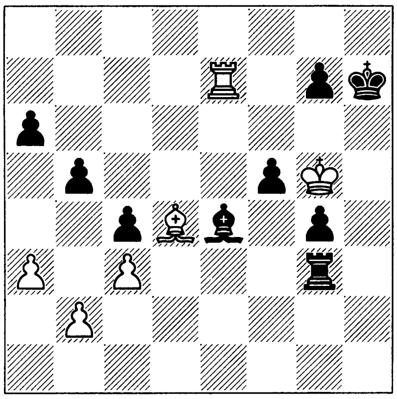
17...♔g4 18 ♔f1 h4 19 gxh4 ♔xh4 20 ♗d6 ♔h3 21 ♔g1 ♘a5 22 ♗b4 ♘c6 23 ♗d6 ♘a5 24 ♔f1 ♘c6 25 ♗c5 ♔h2 26 ♗d6+ ♔h3 ½-½

Here my opponent in a rather odd way said 'Yes', offered his hand and stopped the clock. All this might have been interpreted as resignation but, of course I didn't apply to the arbiter for a win.

Shirov – Lautier

Munich 1993

B



For these annotations I should like give special thanks to German IM Karsten Müller, who was my second in Munich and not only analysed this position with me when the game was adjourned, but also made a very deep investigation of its mysteries later on. His work was checked by German chess columnist and trainer Claus-Dieter Meyer, who then published an article on it in the German magazine *Schach 64* (12/1994), and in these annotations I will often refer to that article.

I was utterly lost a large part of this game, but it was finally adjourned in this curious position, where Black had to seal his move. He is still a lot of material (three pawns) up, but in fact the ending is already dangerous for him since White's attack is now very strong indeed! Nevertheless I wasn't that optimistic about my winning chances, thinking that a draw would be the most likely result. It was more Karsten than me who was finding magnificent tries in the various variations.

1...♔g8?

When the game was resumed I thought that this move was still sufficient for a draw but now it's clear to me that Black gets into serious trouble with it. The main alternative would have been 1...♖d3, trying to get rid of White's bishop as soon as possible. White must then play 2 ♖xg7+, and after 2...♔h8 he has three possibilities, but none of them with a real hope of success:

a) 3 ♗f6 ♖d6 4 ♖g6+ (4 ♖d7+?! ♖xf6 5 ♔xf6 g3 can only be dangerous for White as the black pawns are already too close) 4...♔h7 5 ♖g7+ with a draw by repetition;

b) 3 ♔g6 f4+ 4 ♔h6 ♖xd4 (4...♖h3+ is OK as well – see variation 'c') 5 cxd4 g3 6 ♖f7 ♔g8 7 ♖xf4 g2 8 ♖g4+ ♔f7 9 ♖f4+ (9 ♔g5?! ♗d5! 10 ♔f4 ♔f6 is not advisable) 9...♔g8 10 ♖g4+ with the same outcome;

c) 3 ♔h6 (the most ambitious try) 3...♖h3+! (this time giving up the exchange might cause Black problems, for example 3...a5 4 ♖g5+ ♖xd4 5 cxd4 b4 6 d5 ♗xd5 7 ♖xf5 ♗g8 8 ♖h5 ♗f7 9 ♖xa5 c3

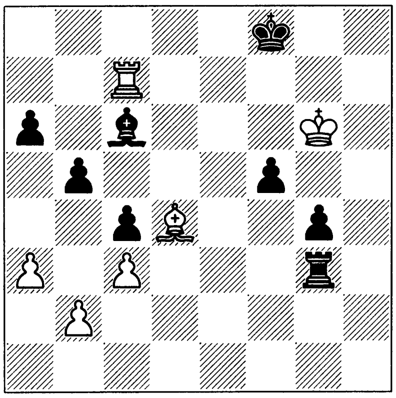
10 bxc3 b3 11 ♖a8+ ♗g8 12 ♖d8 g3 13 ♖d2 ♗c4 14 ♔g5 ♗f1 15 ♔g6 ♗c4 16 a4 and White wins according to C-D. Meyer) 4 ♔g6 f4+ 5 ♔g5 ♗f3 (5...♖d3? was beautifully refuted by Karsten, who shortly before resumption found 6 ♖e7+ ♖xd4 7 cxd4 g3 8 ♖xe4! g2 9 ♖e1! f3 10 ♔g6 f2 11 ♖e8 mate. Need I say that it was this line that put me in a good mood before going to play?) 6 ♔xf4 ♗d1 7 ♖xg4+ ♔h7 8 ♖g7+ ♔h6 9 ♖a7 ♖h2 10 ♖xa6+ ♔h7, and Black should hold his own (C-D. Meyer).

2 ♔g6 ♗c6

The only move.

3 ♗c5!

I give this move an exclamation mark, because it went completely unnoticed by my opponent during his analysis and it was no wonder that he reacted in a bad way. However, the objectively correct continuation (although with the text White is not losing anything) would have been 3 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 4 ♖c7!



To be honest I wouldn't think that White would be able to continue his attack when the black king is no longer in the corner anymore but he can! Black's only reasonable answer then is 4...♗d5, and now our post-mortem analysis led only to a draw after 5 ♔f6 ♔e8 6 ♖c5! ♗b7 (forced) 7 ♖e5+ (7 ♔e6 ♖h3! 8 ♖c7 ♖h6+ 9 ♗f6 ♗d5+!) 7...♔d7 (or 7...♔d8 8 ♗b6+) 8 ♖e7+ ♔c6 9 ♖e6+ with a perpetual, but some months later Karsten found 5 ♖c5!! with the idea that the enemy king doesn't escape from the mating net so easily! A sample line, indicated by C-D. Meyer, is 5...♗e6 6 ♔f6 ♗d7 7 ♖c7 ♔e8 8 ♖a7! ♔d8 (8...♗c6 9 ♖e7+ ♔d8 10 ♗b6+ ♔c8 11 ♖c7+ ♔b8 12 ♖xc6 ♔b7 13 ♖d6 should be winning for White in the long run)) 9 ♗b6+ ♔c8 10 ♖c7+ ♔d8 11 ♖c5+ ♔e8 12 ♖e5+ ♔f8 13 ♗c5+ ♔g8 14 ♖e7! ♖d3 15 ♖g7+ ♔h8 16 ♗d4 ♗c6 17 ♖c7 ♖xd4 18 cxd4 ♗e4 (18...♗d5 19 ♖c5 ♗e4 20 d5) 19 ♔g6 f4+ 20 ♔h6 and we get the same as occurred in the game.

3...♖d3?

A decisive mistake. The only move was 3...♔h8! Now White doesn't achieve anything with 4 ♖xg7 ♗e8+ 5 ♔f6 ♖h3 (5...♖d3 6 ♗d4 g3 7 ♗e5! is a little better for White) 6 ♗d4 ♖h7! 7 ♖g5 ♖c7 8 ♔xf5+ ♔h7 9 ♔xg4 which is completely drawn, but he can still come back to the right idea by continuing 4 ♗d4 ♔g8 (the only move) 5 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 6 ♖c7 ♗d5 7 ♖c5!, etc. Of course, I doubt that I would have found this over the board.

4 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 5 ♗d4 ♖xd4

A sad necessity. 5...♗e8+ 6 ♔h6 ♖h3+ 7 ♔g5 ♖h5+ 8 ♔f4 loses by force.

6 cxd4 f4

On 6...g3 the clearest way to win is 7 ♖h7+ ♔g8 8 ♖c7 ♗e8+ 9 ♔f6 f4 10 d5 and Black is helpless against the white rook, king and the passed pawn.

7 ♖c7! ♗e4+

As Lautier indicated afterwards, the position after 7...♗d5 8 ♖c8+ ♗g8 9 ♖f8! f3 10 d5 g3 11 ♖xf3 ♗xd5 12 ♖xg3 is lost. The text sets a trap, but also allows White to finish the game nicely.

8 ♔h6 ♗d5

Giving up two passed pawns with 8...♔g8 9 ♖g7+ ♔f8 10 ♖xg4 ♗d3 11 ♖xf4+ ♔e7 would prolong Black's resistance, but not save the game in view of 12 ♔g5 ♔d6 (12...a5 13 ♖f6 b4 14 ♖b6) 13 ♖f6+ ♔d5 14 ♖xa6 ♔xd4 15 ♔f4, and the rest is just a matter of White's technique.

9 ♖c5!

Now 9 ♖c8+ ♗g8 10 ♖f8 is a different story, because Black seems to draw by force with 10...g3 11 ♖xf4 g2 12 ♖g4 ♗d5

13 ♔g5 a5 14 ♔f4 b4 15 axb4 axb4 16 ♖g3 ♔h7 17 ♔e3 ♔h6 18 ♔f2 c3 19 bxc3 b3 20 c4 ♗xc4 21 ♖xg2 b2 22 ♖g1 ♗a2. But the text is a killer.

9...♗g8 10 d5! f3

10...g3 is the same in view of 11 d6 g2 (11...♗e6 12 ♖e5) 12 ♖g5 f3 13 d7.

11 d6 ♗e6

Black also gets mated if he promotes his pawns, e.g. 11...f2 12 ♖f5 g3 13 d7 g2 14 d8♕ g1♕ 15 ♕f6+.

12 ♖e5! ♗d7 13 ♖e7 ♔g8 14 ♖xd7 f2 15 ♖g7+ 1-0

Just in time! After 15 ♖g7+ ♔f8, 16 d7 wins, so he resigned.

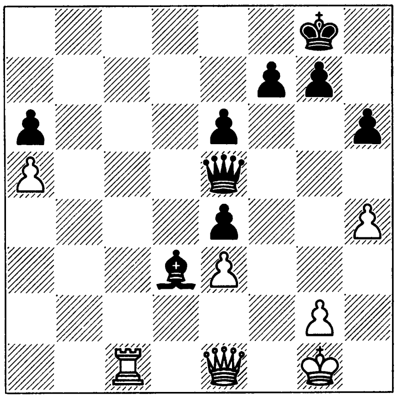
Shirov – Kamsky

Linares 1994

These annotations were made in March 1994 and published in *Schach*.

I had recently been doing well against 'Kramsky' (Kamsky and Kramnik), when all three of us were in a tournament together. Linares was the third time in a year that I had beaten both of them in the same event (albeit because they misplayed good positions!). On the other hand, when I only had to face one of them in a tournament, my winning chances were close to zero!

[AS – Later on I managed to beat Kamsky in a tournament where Kramnik didn't play (Buenos Aires 1994). With the latter things are more difficult, if one excludes rapid chess.]



Black has full compensation for the exchange. In order to drive the black queen from her strong position I now offered a repetition of moves.

39 ♕c3 ♕g3 40 ♕e1 ♕g4?

Kamsky incorrectly avoids the draw.

41 ♖c5!

Now that the black queen stands passively, White plays to win.

41...♔h7

41...f6 42 ♔h2 e5 was better. Here Kamsky offered a draw, one move too late.

42 ♔h2 g5 43 hxg5 hxg5 44 ♖c8!

44 ♕g3 ♕xg3+ 45 ♔xg3 ♔g6 only leads to a draw.

44...♔g6?

Playing into White's hands. Black would also have had a difficult position after 44...e5 45 ♖c5 f6 46 ♕g3! ♕xg3+ 47 ♔xg3 ♔g6 48 ♔h3! ♗f1 49 ♖c1! ♗b5 50 g4 f5 51 ♖c5 fxg4+ 52 ♔g3! His best move was probably still 44...f6.

45 ♖h8!

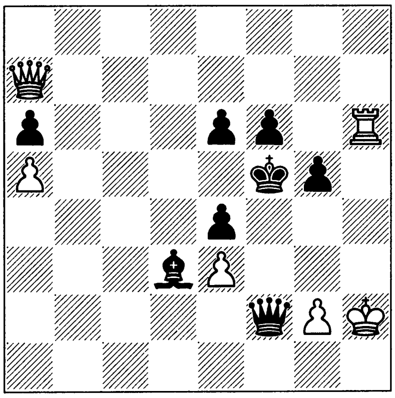
Preparing the decisive incursion of White's queen.

45...f6 46 ♕c3 ♕e2

The ending after 46...♕f5 47 ♕c7 ♕e5+ 48 ♕xe5 fxe5 49 g4! would have been hopeless for Black – White places his rook on b6 and brings his king to the queenside.

47 ♕c7 ♔f5 48 ♕h7+ ♔e5 49 ♕a7! ♔f5 50 ♖h6! ♕f2

50...♕b2 51 ♕h7+ ♔e5 52 ♕g7 ♕f2 (52...♔d6 53 ♕xf6 wins for White) 53 ♕a7 ♔f5 transposes to the game.



Now it looks as though Black can hold on, for example 51 ♕d4 ♔g4!, but after some thought I found ...

51 ♔h3!!

This beautiful move threatens both 52 g4+ ♔e5 53 ♕c5 mate and 52 ♕c5+ e5 53 ♕c8 mate.

51...g4+ 52 ♔h2

Now the threat is 53 ♖h5+ ♔g6 54 ♕h7 mate.

52...g3+ 53 ♔h3 ♕e2

I had been expecting 53...♗e2, when I had prepared 54 ♔h4!! with the idea of 55 ♕c5+ e5 56 ♕c8 mate. 54...♗c4 is forced, but then 55 ♖h5+ ♔g6 56 ♕h7 mates in the style of a good problem!

54 ♕g7 1-0

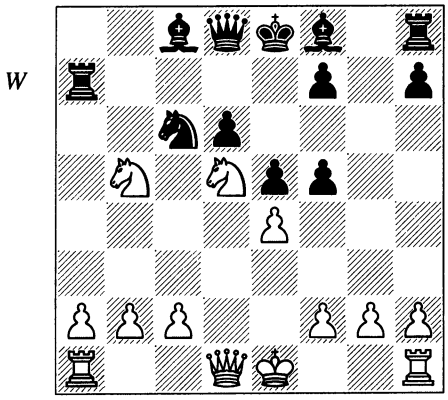
Mitkov – Shirov

Cannes (French League) 1994

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book, based on my notes in *Informator 60*.

This is probably the only time in my career that I was still in time-pressure despite having passed the time control,

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♘f6 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♗f4 e5 8 ♗g5 a6 9 ♘a3 b5 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 ♘d5 f5 12 ♗xb5!? axb5 13 ♘xb5 ♖a7!?



I ought to admit that I was not very familiar with this bishop sacrifice and therefore chose a move once suggested to me by Kramnik a long time ago. Objectively 13...♖a4 appears better but one should know a lot about it.

14 ♘xa7 ♘xa7 15 c3 ♘b5 16 exf5 ♘c7 17 ♘e3!

A strong novelty (17 0-0 would be the old path). White's idea is to play 18 ♕f3 with advantage.

17...♗b7! 18 ♕a4+?!

Now Black is at least equal. My opponent could get a very strong initiative by continuing 18 ♕b3! ♕a8 19 0-0-0 ♗xg2 (Black's last two moves are both forced) 20 ♘xg2 ♕xg2 21 ♔b1!, but he might not have been feeling very ambitious.

18...♕d7 19 ♕b3

19 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 20 ♖d1 d5!, intending ...♗c5, is perfect for Black.

19...♘a6!

Not 19...♕c6 20 0-0-0 with an edge for White.

20 ♘d5 ♘c5 21 ♘f6+ ♔e7

The only move. 21...♔d8? fails to 22 ♘xd7 ♘xb3 23 ♘xe5!! and White is clearly better.

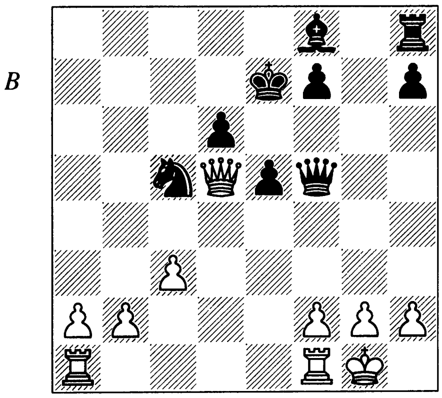
22 ♘d5+ ♔e8

Again 22...♔d8? is bad because of 23 ♕b6+ ♔c8 24 0-0-0!.

23 ♘f6+ ♔e7 24 ♘d5+ ♗xd5!?

Quite a risky decision made after long thought. 24...♔e8 would be an immediate draw, but then the curious ending in the game would never have come into being.

25 ♕xd5 ♕xf5 26 0-0



26...♘e6?!

26...♕e4 27 ♕xe4 ♘xe4 was better, intending ...d5, ...♔e6 and ...♗c5.

27 ♖ad1 ♔f6 28 ♖fe1 ♖g8

28...♘f4 would probably just transpose since after 29 ♕e4, 29...♕xe4?! doesn't seem very promising due to 30 ♖xe4 ♖g8 (30...d5 31 ♖xf4+! exf4 32 ♖xd5 gives White an edge) 31 g3 d5 32 ♖a4! d4 (not 32...e4? 33 f3! favouring White) 33 ♔f1 with a slight plus for White.

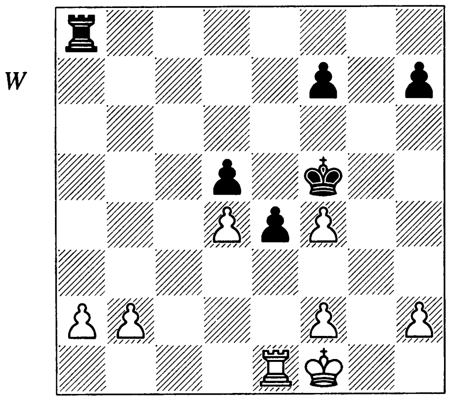
29 ♕e4! ♘f4!

When playing this, it was important to see that I would still be okay despite being two pawns down in a rook ending. 29...♕h5?! 30 ♖d3! intending 30...♘g5 31 ♕c6! looks better for White.

30 ♕xf5+ ♔xf5 31 g3 e4 32 ♖d4

Otherwise Black is certainly not any worse.

32...d5 33 ♔f1 ♗c5! 34 gxf4 ♗xd4 35 cxd4 ♖a8



36 a3

Both players were in some time-pressure and White didn't realize that he should just go for an immediate draw with a continuation such as 36 ♖b1 ♖xa2 37 b4 ♔xf4 38 b5 e3 39 b6 ♖a8 (forced) 40 b7 ♖b8 41 ♖b5! exf2 42 ♖xd5 ♖xb7 43 ♔xf2. A more complicated line which even forces Black to play accurately is 36 ♖a1! ♖a4 37 b3 ♖xd4 38 a4 ♖d3 39 ♖a3 ♖d1+ 40 ♔e2 ♖b1 41 a5 d4 42 a6 d3+ 43 ♔d2 ♖b2+ 44 ♔e1 ♖b1+ leading to a repetition of moves.

36...♖a4 37 ♖d1?!

Passive defence is completely wrong. By playing 37 b4! ♖xa3 38 ♖b1 White could still have reached an easy draw.

37...♔xf4

Now the black king is so close that things are no longer easy for White.

38 ♔e2 f5 39 h3?

Only weakening his position. The last chance lay in playing actively, e.g.: 39 ♖d2 h5 40 b4! (40 ♖d1 h4 41 ♖d2 ♔g4 is slightly better for Black) 40...♖xa3 41 ♖b2 ♔g4! (not 41...♖h3? 42 b5 ♖xh2? 43 b6 e3 44 ♖b1!! exf2 45 ♖b3! and wins) 42 b5 ♖a7 43 b6 ♖b7 and I don't believe that Black's winning chances are real.

39...h6

39...h5 would have been even better for Black.

40 ♖d2 h5

When the first time control finished I realized that my winning chances were very good but there was a practical problem. I had to catch a plane from Nice in just a few hours and it was not clear how long the game would last as the time limit was 20 moves in one hour plus one hour for the remainder of the game – this meant that eight hours could be played! Should I mention that my plane was to Buenos Aires where I was going to have my wedding? The best I could do in this situation was to try to use my opponent's time and move quickly. Later on it spoiled the quality of my play and didn't give me a chance to make this endgame a real wedding present. Still, I should not complain as I did finally win and some time later it was really fascinating to analyse it.

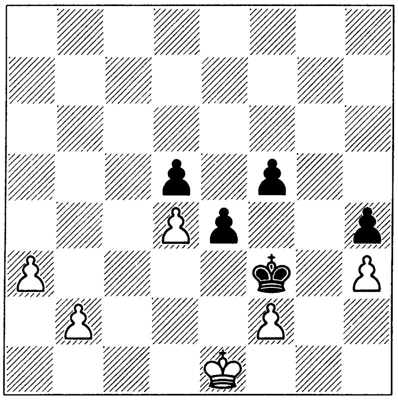
41 ♖d1

Still playing passively. However, after 41 b4 ♖xa3 42 ♖b2 ♖xh3 (this is why 39 h3 was a mistake!) 43 b5 ♖a3 44 b6 ♖a8 Black should also win.

41...h4! 42 ♖d2 ♖c4 43 ♖d1?! ♖c2+ 44 ♖d2 ♖xd2+!

That's the point! The rook endgame turns into a pawn and then a queen ending which is winning for Black.

45 ♔xd2 ♔f3 46 ♔e1



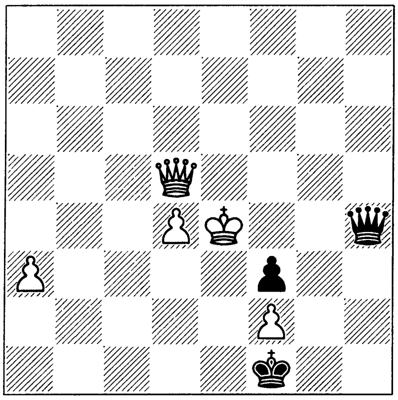
46...♔g2! 47 b4 f4 48 ♔e2! f3+!

Both sides are making the only moves!

49 ♔e3 ♔xh3 50 b5 ♔g2 51 b6 h3 52 b7 h2 53 b8♕ h1♕

This queen ending is winning for Black despite the loss of two of his remaining three pawns.

54 ♕g8+ ♔f1 55 ♕xd5 ♕h6+! 56 ♔xe4 ♕h4+!



57 ♔d3 ♔xf2??

I saw that 57...♕xf2 intending 58...♕g2 or 58...♔g1 would win quite easily but I thought the text was at least as good. If I had thought more about the game than about catching my plane, I would probably have realized the difference. Now the game is drawn but fortunately during the game neither player appreciated this.

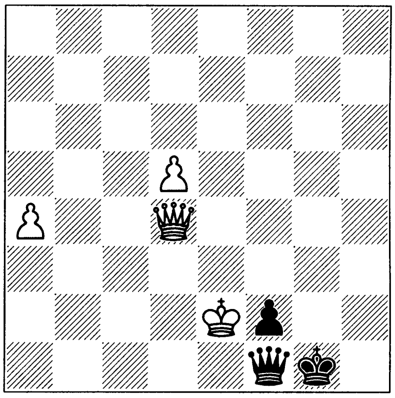
58 a4 ♕g3?! 59 ♕e4!!

It's odd, but I didn't realize during the game how strong this move is; indeed, I was still convinced that my position was winning. Other moves would lose e.g.: 59 ♕c6? ♔g1 60 ♕c1+ ♔h2! 61 ♕h6+ ♕h3! 62 ♕f4+ (62 ♕d6+? ♔g1 63 ♕g6+ ♕g2 wins) 62...♔g2 63 ♕e4 ♔f1! 64 ♕e3 ♕f5+ 65 ♔d2 ♔g2 with the idea 66...f2 and wins.

59...♔g1 60 ♕e3+ ♔g2 61 ♕e4 ♔h2 62 d5! f2+ 63 ♔e2 ♕g2 64 ♕f4+ ♔g1 65 ♕d4!

Centralization is the clue of saving White's game. Of course, 65 ♕e3? ♕g4+ would be different story

65...♕f1+



66 ♔d2??

Now White's king gets sidelined and he finally loses the game. Correct would be 66 ♔f3 ♕h3+ 67 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 68 ♔d2 ♕g5+ 69 ♔e2 ♕e7+ 70 ♔d3! (70 ♔f3?? ♕f6+ wins) 70...♕a3+ 71 ♔e2 ♕a2+ 72 ♔f3 ♕b3+ 73 ♔g4! and Black cannot strengthen his position.

66...♕e1+ 67 ♔c2 ♕e2+ 68 ♔c1

68 ♔c3 is the same in view of 68...♕f3+ 69 ♔b4 ♔g2 70 ♕g7+ ♕g3 71 ♕b2 ♔h3 and the pawn queens.

68...♕f3!

Very exact. Now everything is in time – both promoting the pawn and arriving at the airport!

69 d6

69 ♔d2 ♔g2 70 ♕g7+ ♕g3 wins.

69...♔g2 70 ♕d2

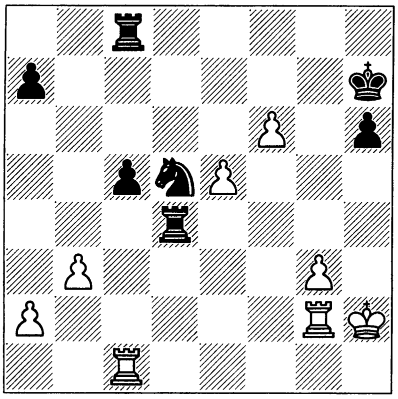
Or 70 ♕g7+ ♕g3 71 ♕b7+ ♔h2 72 ♕h7+ ♔g1 73 ♕a7 ♕xd6, winning.

70...♕a3+ 71 ♔b1 ♕b3+ 72 ♔c1 ♔f3 0-1

Shirov – Ivanchuk

Belgrade 1995

These annotations were made during the preparation of this book.



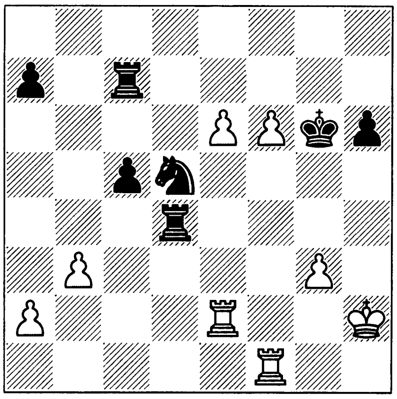
The time scramble had just finished and I had sadly come to the realization that my position was very difficult. But then I found a nice combination.

41 ♖e2 ♔g6

Playing quickly as he didn't see my intentions, but I doubt that Black's winning chances would be very good any way.

42 ♖f1 ♖c7 43 e6!

White sacrifices first one, then another passed pawn, but makes a funny repetition of moves which Black cannot avoid.



43...♘xf6 44 e7 ♘e8 45 ♖f8 ♖c8 46 ♖ef2! ♖e4 47 ♖g8+ ♔h7 48 ♖ff8 ♖xe7 49 ♖h8+ ♔g6 50 ♖hg8+ ♖g7 51 ♖h8!

This is the point! I had already seen this when playing 41 ♖e2. Even my opponent couldn't help whispering 'Very beautiful!'.

51...♖e7 ½-½

Otherwise Black has to give back the piece.

Leko – Shirov

Dortmund 1996

These annotations were made in July 1996 and have not been published before.

Is it always easy to win with two rooks against a rook and three pawns? After this game I doubt it.

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7

Getting into the middlegame has recently become a difficult task for me and somehow these two solid moves give me a certain confidence that the game will still be going after the opening.

3 ♘c3 c6 4 ♘f3 d6 5 a4 ♘f6 6 ♗e2 0-0 7 0-0 ♘bd7

I went for 7...♘a6 two rounds earlier but then had to suffer to make a draw.

8 ♗f4 ♖e8!?

Surprisingly, this is a new move. Black's idea is to continue his development by 9...♕c7. The immediate 8...♕c7 I didn't like because of 9 e5! ♘h5 10 ♗g5 dxe5 11 ♗xe7 ♖e8 12 d5! as I was not sure whether my compensation for the exchange after 12...♖xe7 13 d6 ♕d8 14 dxe7 ♕xe7 would be sufficient. Later on I learned that all this has already occurred in the game Levitina-Ioseliani, Beijing 1992, which Black won. Still I am not convinced that Black is equal in this line.

9 ♖e1

Now Black can play his idea. White could try to cross Black's plan with 9 ♘d2!?.

9...♕c7 10 e5 ♘h5! 11 exd6 exd6 12 ♗e3 d5

Black has equalized.

13 ♕d2 ♘f8!

Tempting White's knight to e5 where it will not do a lot. I considered 13...♘hf6 14 ♗f4 to be slightly inferior for me.

14 ♘e5 ♘f6 15 ♗f4 ♘e6!?

As often happens, I decided to go for complications at all costs. Had I seen everything, I would probably have preferred 15...♕d8 with equality, or 15...♕a5 which Leko was intending to answer with the unclear 16 ♘d3!?.

16 ♘xg6 ♕b6!

Not 16...♘xf4? 17 ♘xf4 ♗h6 18 ♘fxd5 and White wins.

17 ♘h4!

17 ♘e5?! ♕xd4 is better for Black.

17...♘xf4!?

Maybe not really bad, but certainly an extremely risky decision. The 'normal' line would be 17...♕xd4 18 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 19 ♗d3 ♗e6 20 ♗e5 ♘d7 with approximate equality.

18 ♕xf4 ♕xb2 19 ♕d2!

Of course, I saw this move but underestimated it. As often happens, panic set in ...

19...♘e4?!

There is nothing wrong with 19...♕b6, since after 20 ♗d3 ♗d7 21 ♗f5 ♖xe1+ 22 ♖xe1 ♖e8 White has no advantage because of his stupid knight on c3. The line 23 ♗xd7 ♖xe1+ 24 ♕xe1 ♘xd7 25 ♘f5 ♗xd4! 26 ♕e8+ ♘f8 only supports this statement.

20 ♘xe4 dxe4!

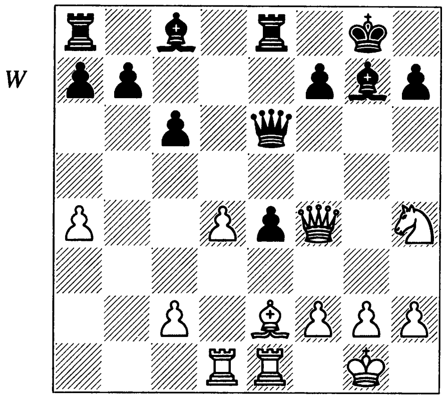
Too late I realized that 20...♖xe4? 21 ♘f3! would be clearly in White's favour.

21 ♖ad1 ♕a2!

Black has to be very accurate now. My original intention 21...♗e6? would fail to 22 ♗h5!.

22 ♕f4 ♕e6 *(D)*

Black's position looks pretty dubious but in fact things are not so clear because the bishop pair and the position of the white knight yield Black certain counterchances.



23 c4

If White wants to fight for an advantage then sharper play is required. I think 23 h3 would be White's best chance. Black should then continue 23...f5 24 g4 ♕f6! 25 ♘xf5 (25 ♗c4+ ♔h8 26 g5 ♕f8 is amazingly unclear since White can't mate Black; the same is true after 25 g5 ♕f7) 25...♗xf5 26 ♕xf5 ♕h4! 27 ♗c4+ ♔h8 28 ♕h5 ♕xh5 29 gxh5 ♗h6 and although White is a pawn up the game should be drawn.

23...♗d7 24 h3?

Now it's simply too late. It was obligatory to play 24 a5! with an unclear game.

24...♕f6 25 ♕g3 c5!

Now Black is not only better but winning! The a-pawn will be worth a piece.

26 dxc5 ♗xa4 27 ♖d6 ♕c3! 28 ♖f1!

Leko, however, puts of a stiff resistance.

28...♕xg3 29 fxg3 ♗e5 30 ♘f5!

30 ♖h6 ♗d7 31 ♘f5 (31 ♗h5 ♔g7! 32 ♖d6 ♗e6 wins for Black) 31...♗xf5 32 ♖xf5 f6 would be hopeless. By sacrificing the exchange, Leko sets several traps, into one of which I fell.

30...♗xd6 31 cxd6 ♗d7! 32 ♘h6+

32 ♘e7+ ♔f8 33 ♘d5 ♖e5 is good enough for Black.

32...♔g7 33 ♖xf7+ ♔xh6 34 ♖xd7 ♖ed8! 35 ♖xb7 ♖xd6 36 ♗g4 ♖f6?

What can be more natural then parrying White's only threat and moving the rook away from White's passed pawn? However, now things become much more tricky, while Leko's suggestion 36...♔g6! (centralizing the king is one of the primary endgame rules!) would have won fairly easily, for example 37 c5 (37 ♗d7 e3

38 ♔f1 ♖d2 also wins) 37...♖c6 38 ♖b5 a6 39 ♖a5 ♖d8 40 ♗e2 ♖d5.

37 c5 a5 38 c6!!

Amazingly, White gives up his only asset – the passed pawn. However, there was no time to promote it, e.g. 38 ♗d7 a4 39 c6 a3 40 c7 a2.

38...♖xc6 39 ♗f5 ♖ca6!!

The only way to win. 39...e3? 40 h4 ♖h8 41 ♖e7! would yield White too many chances.

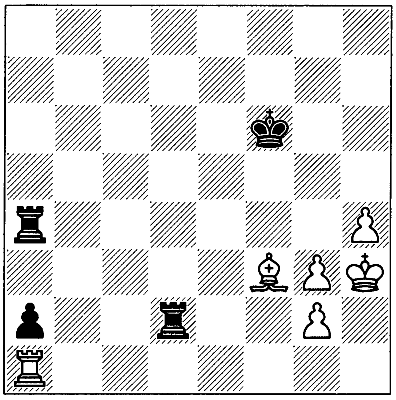
40 ♖xh7+

Now 40 h4? loses to 40...♖8a7.

40...♔g5 41 ♗xe4 ♖8a7 42 ♖h8

All forcing lines were lost for White, for instance 42 ♗b7 a4 43 h4+ ♔g6 44 ♗e4+ ♔f6 or 42 h4+ ♔g4! 43 ♗b7 ♔xg3! 44 ♖g7+ ♔xh4 45 g3+ ♔h5. With the text, Leko tries to put up a more stubborn defence and makes it tricky until the very end.

42...a4 43 ♖c8 a3 44 ♖c1 a2 45 ♖a1 ♖d6 46 ♔h2 ♖d2 47 h4+ ♔g4 48 ♗f3+ ♔f5 49 ♔h3 ♖a5 50 ♗g4+ ♔e5 51 ♗h5 ♔f6 52 ♗f3 ♖a4! *(D)*



Black has taken control of all the squares from which the white bishop can attack the pawn, so now White has to give it up. But, astonishingly, it's not yet the end of the story!

53 ♗c6 ♖b4 54 ♗d5

Forced.

54...♖xd5 55 ♖xa2

It's not so easy to win the game because when Black activates his rooks, White gets a lot of checks which drive the black king far away; then he can push his pawns. However, Leko didn't notice my simple plan, stood passively by and threw the game away immediately.

55...♖d6 56 ♖f2+?!

White's best chance would be 56 g4! and although it seems to me that Black is winning after 56...♖d3+ 57 g3 ♖bb3 58 g5+ (58 ♖a6+ ♔e7 59 ♖a7+ ♔d6 60 ♖a6+ ♔c7 61 h5 ♖xg3+ 62 ♔h4 ♖h3+ 63 ♔g5 ♖b4!) 58...♔e6 59 ♖a6+ ♔d7 60 ♖a7+ ♔c6 61 ♔g4 ♖xg3+ 62 ♔h5 (62 ♔f5 ♖b4) 62...♖b4!, I am not one hundred per cent sure about it.

56...♔g6 57 ♖a2 ♖b3 58 ♖a8?

White could still reach a similar position by playing 58 ♔h2 ♖b4 59 ♔h3 ♔h6 60 g4 ♖d3+ 61 g3 ♖bb3 62 ♖a6+ (62 g5+ ♔h5 63 ♖g2 ♖b4 wins) 62...♔g7 63 ♖a7+ ♔f8 64 ♖a8+ ♔e7 but, as I already indicated, I think that Black should still win.

58...♔h7

Now it's all over.

59 ♖a7+ ♔h6 60 ♖f7 ♖dd3 0-1

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